



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

The Only Publication authorized by the Hon. W.F. Cody (BUFFALO BILL)

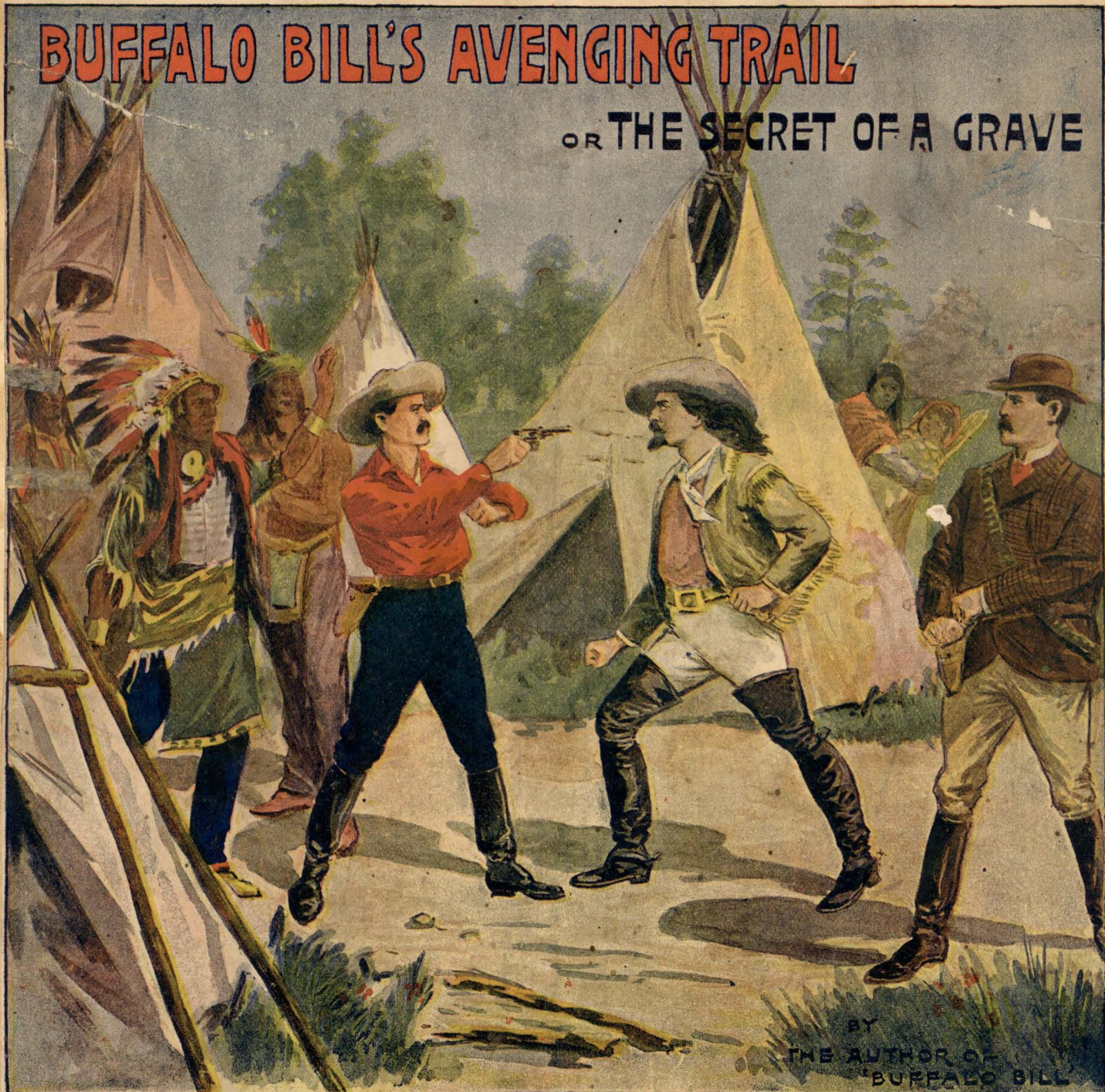
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No. 6.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S AVENGING TRAIL

OR THE SECRET OF A GRAVE



BY
THE AUTHOR OF
"BUFFALO BILL"

"LIAR!" SHOUTED BUFFALO BILL, AND UNHEEDING THE LEVELED PISTOL HE SPRANG FORWARD TO CONFRONT HIS ACCUSER.



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NEW YORK, June 22, 1901.

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BUFFALO BILL'S AVENGING TRAIL;

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CHAPTER I.

A RUN FOR LIFE.

Four horsemen were flying for their lives across a Western prairie, their horses urged to top speed in an endeavor to escape from those who were upon their track and who were merciless foes.

The pursuers were full half a hundred Indians, stretched out in a long line of chase, according to the speed of the ponies they rode.

The four fugitives were well mounted, but they were kept back by several pack animals they were leading, and which they cared not to desert save in the last extremity.

Two of the men were plainsmen, for no one could mistake that fact, rough-riders, weather-beaten, hard fighters—in fact, thorough bordermen, well mounted, well armed, buckskin-clad, with broad sombreros shading their stern faces—ready to stand up and die right there if called upon to do so.

The other two were of a different type, and English beyond a doubt.

One was a stern-faced man of thirty, darkly bronzed, handsome, well-formed, and with the air of a soldier who had seen some hard service and was true as steel.

Well dressed in hunting costume, armed with the latest pattern of rifle and revolvers, splendidly mounted, he looked just what he was, an English gentleman come to America for a purpose he had the will and determination to carry out, if it were in man's power to do so.

The fourth rider was the servant, half-companion, of the other, and also an Englishman.

The four were urging their horses to the utmost in their desire to reach a rise miles ahead where there was a clump of thick timber, and scattered rocks.

Once there, they had, at least, a shelter for themselves and horses, and a chance to stand off the great odds against them.

"We'll miss one man a heap, sir, but I'm thinking either Barney or me better take the best critter an' keep

right on to the fort fer help, fer if we is all caught in ther timber we has got ter fight it out with no hope of gettin' aid."

So said one of the plainsmen as they rode along, addressing the Englishman who looked to be the leader.

"You know best, guide, so use your own judgment.

"We will reach the timber without doubt, but with little time to spare, and my horse, perhaps, would be the best for the run.

"How far is it?"

There was no anxiety in tone or look of the speaker, and he glanced coolly back at their pursuers.

"All of thirty miles, sir, an', as Barney is the lightest, he better go, only we'll keep his weapons as we will need 'em, save a gun fer him ter carry ag'in accidents."

"I'll go, though I don't wish ter desert yer, fer ter me it do look as though thar be no hope fer them as remains, though I'll do my best ter git help from ther fort."

This was not encouraging, and yet it was spoken to men who were looking death squarely in the face.

"It is a strange circumstance, men, that I had a brother killed on these American plains nearly two years ago, and by Indians.

"Carrol, my man here, was with him and he came on a hunt for big game, was caught alone far from camp and slain—at least, that is the story as told to me, and his body was found, and he had been shot and scalped.

"Carrol had it buried, and then he returned to England, and I am here now to visit the grave in which my brother is buried."

"It was his body, all right, sir, though hard to recognize, I admit, as it was some days before it was found," said the servant.

"Doubtless it was, but I must have the proof," and, again glancing back, the Englishman added:

"The leaders are gaining upon us steadily."

"Yes, these pack animals can't keep up with horse under the saddle, but hold on like grim death, say I, to our grub an' outfit," said Guide Barney.

"Oh, yes, if we had to stop and fight for it; but I believe we can give a good account of ourselves once we reach the timber," the Englishman remarked.

"If we doesn't, them Injuns will," rejoined Bruce Bond, one of the plainsmen, dryly.

They were now nearing the timber, which was thick, on considerable of a rise, and with little mounds of earth and rock boulders near the edge, which would be a good shelter for defense.

"Barney, you be all ready ter dig out, soon as we strike ther timber, an' yer better take ther gent's horse as ther one fer ther work.

"It will take yer four hours ter git to ther fort, one

ter git ther sogers ready, and as much as five ter git back, all of ten hours ter make it, an' don't let 'em fer-git we is fightin' fer life whar chances is big ag'in us an' our scalps is wanted badly," said Bruce Bond, and Brad Barney answered:

"My hair won't lie easy until I saves yours, pards, so look fer help ter come soon as it kin be got to yer, an' Injun blood ter run if we finds yer wiped out."

The Indians, meanwhile, were gaining, and came dashing on in a way that showed they intended to rush in on the palefaces before they had a chance to rally and get ready for an attack.

Nearer and nearer the fugitives drew to the timber, and soon were right in its shadow, with a dozen red horsemen close behind and three times that many stretched out on the plain within a mile.

Bruce Bond had selected the spot in the timber where they would enter, and was heading toward it, when suddenly a horseman rode out of the thicket directly toward them, threw his rifle to his shoulder—and pulled trigger.

A chief in advance fell backward off his pony at the crack of the shot, a brave following tumbled headlong from his saddle at a second shot, while a wild war cry broke from the lips of the horseman whom the two guides and the Indians at once recognized.

"The Long Hair—Pa-e-has-ka, The Long Hair!" was the name that came from the Indians in startled cries.

"Buffalo Bill!" cried Bruce Bond, the chief guide, in an exultant tone.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE MEETING.

"Back to shelter, all of you—then turn and fire. Those reds must be beaten back—now!"

So ordered, in a commanding voice, heard by the Indians, even, the horseman who had come alone to the rescue of the Englishman and his party.

"Must I go on to ther fort fer help, Chief Bill?" called out Brad Barney, one of the guides.

"No, I have help within hearing of our rifles. Stand ready, all!"

With this command, the horseman, who had hastily led his horse back into the shelter of the timber, ran to the front to face the charging Indians.

The Englishman and his servant quickly placed themselves on one side of him, their eyes fixed upon the splendid-looking man who had risked his life to aid them.

Upon the other side were the two guides.

They were all ready for action.

The Indians had checked up under the deadly fire of the horseman who had so suddenly appeared, but were

only waiting to have others come up and charge in large force upon those they had believed would soon be their prey.

"Now they are coming—throw no lead away—fire!" called out the bold rescuer, and his and the other four rifles cracked together.

"Pump it into them," was the next order.

Under such a coolly determined and deadly aimed volley the redskins wavered, fired a few shots in return, sent a shower of arrows into the timber and fled out of range.

They dared not press on until their whole force had come up.

Then, outnumbering the whites ten to one, they would dash in upon them in an irresistible rush and kill them at close quarters, if half their braves fell.

But as the triumphant cheer of the five men died away afar off there was heard the notes of a bugle.

"Ah! Captain Dangerfield has heard the firing, suspects I am in trouble, and that is his call to me that he is coming."

"Yes, and ther reds hears it, too, fer look at 'em going now," cried Brad Barney.

"They is, fer a fact; but we owes our lives to you, Bill, fer they'd a broke in upon us fer sartin in mad rush they made if you hedn't been here," said Bruce Bond.

"They might have, and might not," was the modest reply, and he turned to the Englishman with the remark, as he saw an arrow sticking in his coat sleeve:

"You are wounded, I fear, sir."

"It is nothing—a scratch, and I am glad that it is no worse. And you, my brave friend?"

"All right, thank you, sir, as the others appear to be," and he glanced at the servant, Carrol, and the two guides.

"We is all right, Pard Cody, thanks to you," said Bruce Bond, while Brad Barney added:

"Yes, pard, an' you is allus ther man ter chip in an' help out a fellow as is in trouble. It's lucky you was so near."

"I am out scouting with Captain Dangerfield and his troop—there they come now and the Indians are off, you see," and the speaker pointed to a distant rise of the prairie where cavalry came rapidly into view, while the redskins began to scatter in hot haste.

"My friend, I owe you my life, in fact all of us do, and I assure you your brave act will never be forgotten by me—let me introduce myself as Lord Victor Elstone, of England, come to America upon an important mission, accompanied by my good servant, Carrol, here,

and under the guidance of these two bordermen, who were to guide me to the fort."

"I am glad to meet you, sir—my name is William F. Cody—called on the plains Buffalo Bill."

"Ah, I have heard of you. You are the chief of army scouts."

Buffalo Bill nodded.

"I am more than glad to meet you," continued the Englishman, "and to find I was not mistaken in hearing the guides call you Buffalo Bill—you are the very man I came to America to see, sir," and the two warmly grasped hands, the English nobleman greatly impressed with the handsome, fearless face of the frontiersman and his singularly striking and attractive appearance.

"Indeed, sir, you came to see me?" asked the chief of scouts surprisedly.

"I certainly did, sir."

"Elstone, you said your name was, sir?"

"Yes, Victor Elstone, an officer of the British Army."

"I knew an English officer of that name—or, rather, it was Major Walter Elstone."

"My brother, sir, and through whose death here on the American plains I succeeded to his title and estates, poor fellow."

"I am indeed, glad to know you, sir. I buried your unfortunate brother over a year ago, for he was slain here."

"Then of all men, sir, you are the one to give me the information I seek," said Lord Elstone, his face showing deep feeling for his dead brother, mingled with joy at having met the famous scout, Buffalo Bill, in such an accidental, though tragic, manner.

CHAPTER III.

THE SCOUT TRAIL.

The Englishman and Buffalo Bill stood apart from the others; the servant Carrol and the two guides having gone to the edge of the timber to watch the coming of the cavalry, and the flight of the Indians. The latter, after checking their flight, were apparently returning to fight the soldiers.

"Don't fire on them, men, for they are coming only on a dash to pick up their dead and wounded."

"If they show fight, Captain Dangerfield will handle them, and I never kill a redskin unless he forces me to do so," called out Buffalo Bill, and his words were a surprise to the English officer.

That the scout spoke truly, the Indians now showed, for they made a dash in near the timber, picked up their dead and wounded, and went off at a run with the cavalry yet out of range.

But the troopers did not head for the timbers, as they rode on in pursuit of the flying redskins.

killed at a motte twenty miles to the south of here, many moons ago?"

"The Red Heart remembers; it was said that my braves killed him."

"True; the stranger who was killed was the brother of my friend, here, and those slain with him were bordermen; now let the chief tell me where his young men were then?"

"They were far from here, many days' travel to the north."

"So I thought, and there were no Indians to my knowledge anywhere near here at the time; now I would like two of the Red Heart's young men to go with us to the motte on the prairie, where the dead men were buried, and they shall be paid well for their work."

"Let the Hunter come with me to the lodges of the Antelope and Running Bear; they will go with him," and the chief led the way, followed by Buffalo Bill.

As his companion turned to follow, he heard in a distinct loud whisper and in perfect English:

"One moment, my lord!"

Turning quickly, he beheld in the entrance to the *tepee*, the tall form of a white man.

In surprise, he turned toward him, for he had not expected to see a paleface in that far-away Indian camp; but the man whom the chief had called by the name of Death Shot, gave him no time for thought, but said, hastily:

"A word with you, sir, and kindly step in here out of sight of yonder man."

"Yonder man, sir, is my comrade, and I may add, my friend; I have nothing to hide from him," was the haughty reply of the Englishman.

The Death Shot smiled meaningly and answered:

"You may think differently when you know him as I do—nay, my lord, be patient and I will explain, for I left the fort to follow you here, and protect you from a terrible danger."

The man spoke earnestly, and with an impressiveness that caused Lord Elstone to ask, anxiously:

"In Heaven's name, what do you mean?"

"First, I know that you came to America to search for the body of a brother, supposed to have been slain by the Indians about a year ago."

"Suppose such is my duty here?"

"You have engaged the services of the famous scout, Buffalo Bill, to find the body of your brother for you, as he is said to have buried him?"

"Well?"

"And this Buffalo Bill tells you that your brother was slain by the Indians?"

"No, on the contrary, he leans to a belief that some desperadoes killed him."

"He should certainly know, my Lord Elstone."

"What mean you?" asked Lord Elstone, as the same meaning smile passed over the man's face.

"I repeat it, Buffalo Bill should know, above all else, who killed your unfortunate brother."

"Explain yourself, sir."

"I say Buffalo Bill knows of his death, and who killed him."

"Great God! you imply a doubt of that man that cannot entertain, and your words seem positive that my brother is really dead, though I had hoped against hope that I might, after all, find him alive, a captive among the Indians."

"Dismiss such a hope, my lord, for your brother is dead, as I *saw him killed*."

"You! you saw my brother killed?" cried Lord Elstone, excitedly, coming closely to the Death Shot and looking him squarely in the face.

"I did, my lord. I had taken refuge in the timber upon the approach of some men, and, from my place of concealment, saw your brother and the two who accompanied him shot down in their tracks by one who lay in ambush."

"Good God! Do you tell me the truth?"

"What motive have I to lie to you, my lord?"

"None, that I can see; and who was it that killed my brother?"

"A very desperate, dangerous man, and one who feared as a desperado."

"Yet, what incentive had he to kill my poor brother?"

"One that has caused many a crime: the greed of gold, and your brother wore valuable diamonds, and had a purse well filled, as I had often seen, for I knew him well."

"You knew poor Walter, then?"

"Yes, we were often together, and yet I dared not make an attempt to save him, as in swimming a river my pistols and rifle had become wet, and I knew my death would follow; but knowing that you were being led into the same trap as your brother, I left the fort and hastened here to warn you, as I heard you were coming to the camp of Red Heart."

"From my heart I thank you; but who is it you would warn me against, and what have I to fear?"

Like lightning, the man's hand dropped upon the butt of a revolver, and the next instant, stepping out of the *tepee* the muzzle covered the head of Buffalo Bill who at that moment approached, accompanied by Red Heart and several warriors.

Then in loud tones, he cried:

"Lord Elstone, there stands your foe, and the murderer of your brother!"

"Liar!" shouted Buffalo Bill, and, unheeding the

pistol leveled at him, he sprang forward toward his accuser; but Red Heart gave a signal to his braves, and hurling themselves upon the scout, he was dragged heavily to the ground, and after a fierce struggle, securely bound, Lord Elstone, in his amazement and grief at what he had heard, not knowing what to say or how to act.

With a bitter laugh, the Death Shot glanced down at the bound scout, and cried:

"Ha! ha! ha! Buffalo Bill, my handsome desperado, who holds the winning hand now?"

A shadow seemed suddenly to flit over the recumbent form of Buffalo Bill, and the clear voice said, in ringing tones:

"I hold the winning hand, Roy Kent!"

Every eye was fastened upon the speaker, and they beheld the slender, yet graceful and agile form of a young girl!

She was standing across the body of Buffalo Bill, her form bent forward, and both arms outstretched, while in each hand she held a revolver.

One muzzle covered the heart of the man she had addressed as Royal Kent, and the other was pointed at Red Heart, who stood just at the side of Death Shot.

She was fancifully attired in leggings, short skirt, and tight-fitting bodice, and her belt contained a long knife, while a small repeating rifle was slung at her back.

Her head was sheltered by a black sombrero, encircled by a gold cord, and ornamented with a plume upon the left side, which was looped up with a pair of gold miniature cavalry sabres.

Her form was perfect, her face beautiful in spite of its reckless boldness, and the eyes had a dangerous light in them as they rested upon the white face of Roy Kent, from whose lips broke two words, as though in deadly fear:

"Wild Nell!"

CHAPTER V.

A BORDER WOMAN.

When the name of Wild Nell passed the lips of Roy Kent, or Death Shot, as the Indians called him, it was evident that the woman was not only well known to him, but to Buffalo Bill and also the redskins, the latter seeming somewhat startled by her sudden and unexpected presence in their midst.

"Yes, Roy Kent, I am here to trump your little game of deviltry," said the woman, in a calm, threatening voice, and her slender fingers still lightly pressed the triggers, and both Red Heart and Death Shot seemed to fully realize that their lives hung but by a slender thread; but the white man's reckless nature came to his

aid, and, without the tremor of a muscle at his danger, he said, with a harsh laugh:

"Nell, your acting is dangerous here, so put up those playthings."

The woman hesitated, and her hands slightly trembled, increasing the danger of the two men at whom the muzzle pointed.

"Put them up, I say!"

The voice of Roy Kent was now stern and commanding, and there was an evil glitter in his dark eyes as they looked full in the face of the woman, who now seemed visibly affected, for a tremor ran through her form, and as she lowered the weapons, she cried:

"Roy, I cannot aim at your heart; no, a thousand times, no."

Her head drooped upon her bosom and she stepped back from her threatening attitude, while her hands hung limp at her side, and in a voice barely audible, she said, plaintively:

"Bill, you are doomed; I can do no more."

All, even the red warriors, seemed surprised at the sudden change that had come over the woman, and Buffalo Bill and Lord Elstone wondered at the strange influence of the man over her, an influence that seemed to hold her wholly in his power, and prove that some dark mystery lay behind it.

As for Roy Kent, he showed no emotion, not even elation at his triumph; but again turning to his bound prisoner, he said:

"You see, Buffalo Bill, that I do hold trumps against you in this game, and I tell you frankly that you have but a few moments to live."

"What! Would you kill me as you would a mad dog?" asked the scout, indignantly.

"Ay, as you have often killed the poor redman, and even as you did the brother of this man, who would have shared a like fate but for me; I will kill you without mercy."

"No, I cannot permit this to be done, for I must first know that he is guilty of what you accuse him, which I doubt decidedly; if guilty, the laws of your land, not you, must deal with him, and I warn you not to lay hands upon him."

It was Lord Elstone that spoke, and there was that in his face which proved he would maintain his words; but, with angry brow, Roy Kent turned upon him:

"I tell you, Sir Englishman, that here on the border we take the law in our own hands, and Judge Lynch shall settle with Buffalo Bill."

"Judge Lynch as a magistrate, then, but not you."

"Ha! ha! that is good indeed; but you mistake me, my lord, for Judge Lynch in America is a stout rope, and the nearest tree."

"Ah, I comprehend your Americanism now; but I repeat it, the scout shall not be dealt with except in full fairness."

"And I tell you he shall die within the hour," savagely said Boy Kent, and he dropped his hand meaningly upon the butt of his revolver.

"The paleface is a fool; does he think the Red Heart has no tongue?"

Roy Kent started at the deep tones of the Indian chief, and turned quickly toward him, as though to question his meaning, and in the dignified manner of the warrior he continued:

"The paleface scout is a mighty brave, and he has led the armies of the Great Father into the lands of my people, beating them back further and further toward the setting sun.

"His eye is like the eagle's, and his hand like the rock, when he has met my warriors in battle, and many scalps have hung from his belt, but he has not a crooked tongue, and he is not a coyote to sneak away at the sight of a man or report of a rifle, and my braves honor him.

"Listen: when my people were at war with the palefaces, the Sioux came to my village and stole my only child, the Star Eye of the Pawnees, and the white scout met them in battle and took her from them and brought her to my *tepee*, though my young men were on his trail hunting for his scalp.

"Has the Death Shot heard enough, or does he wish me to put my braves upon his trail, that he comes to my village and asks me to turn my back upon my friend?"

The face of Roy Kent grew black, and his eyes glittered maliciously at the quiet but telling speech of the Red Heart, whom he now knew had deceived him, and had never intended to harm Buffalo Bill.

Seeing, by the manner of the Indians, that they sided with their chief, he said, fiercely:

"Bah! the Red Heart talks like a squaw; but let him protect the scout now, for my day will yet come to take his life, and, old chief, my belt will yet be heavy with the scalps of your warriors."

Without another word, the Death Shot turned on his heel and walked toward his horse, which was lariatied upon the prairie not far distant.

A few of the younger braves seemed anxious to follow him, but Red Heart called them back, while Wild Nell bent over Buffalo Bill and quickly severed the rawhide bonds that bound his hands and feet, and Lord Elstone walked away, his breast filled with conflicting emotions.

Springing to his feet, the scout said, pleasantly:

"Nell, I owe you, perhaps, my life, for there is no telling what that villain would have done; but what is he to you, may I ask?"

"Oh, Bill, do not ask me," burst passionately from

the girl's lips, and, as if to change the subject, the scout asked:

"But what brought you out here alone on the prairies? I know you know not fear, and are a good borderwoman, yet this is running a great risk."

"I came, Bill, to save you, for I knew that Roy Kent was plotting against your life, and intended to get Red Heart to kill you."

"But why should he seek my life, Nell?"

"You have thwarted him on several occasions, I believe, and with you out of the way he would hold greater power on the border."

"But how know you all this, Nell?"

A pained expression passed over the woman's face, and she answered in deep tones:

"I know it as well as I know that Roy Kent wrecked my life, Bill. But enough; I came to save you, and, like a coward, under his eye, I faltered, when I should have sent a bullet through his heart, but the time shall yet come when my nerve shall be as iron, and my aim shall be true."

"Ah, Nell, yours should be a different life from the one you lead; there are many men at the post who would gladly make you their wife if you would love them."

"Love! speak not to me of love, for I hate the word; it is poison in my heart; but now you know that you have a bitter foe in Roy Kent. Watch him!"

Without a word more, she turned away, and going to a pony lariatied out upon the prairie, dashed away at full speed, just as Lord Elstone approached Buffalo Bill.

"Cody, forgive me, if for an instant I doubted you; now I feel that that man only had set a plot to get rid of you for some reason known but to you and himself," and Lord Elstone extended his hand.

"I hold no grudge, my lord, you are a stranger in a strange land, and having lost a brother here know not whom to trust," and Buffalo Bill grasped the extended hand, while the Englishman continued:

"You Americans are a wonderful people, Cody, a wonderful people, indeed; but, tell me, who was that strange woman?"

"She is known as Wild Nell, my lord, and there ends my knowledge of her, except that she lives alone in a cabin near the Post, is a dangerous hand with a rifle, revolver and knife, can ride like an Indian, and, though admired by many, seems to have no preference for any one."

"Yet that man, Roy Kent, seemed to possess almost a magnetic influence over her."

"Yes, and that is what I cannot understand, for I believed he hardly knew her, and now I am convinced that beneath it all lies some deep mystery, a mystery I shall yet fathom, for I wish to know more of this Kent."

ou "And who is he?"

"He has a mining interest of some kind in Colorado, is said, and has been a volunteer scout, and a good one, for the Indians gave him the name of Death Shot, in account of his deadly aim."

"He is a handsome, dashing fellow, and has evidently received an education."

"So I believe, my lord, and, as he has now taken such an interest in me, I am determined to find out more regarding him, so shall at once put a couple of Indians on his trail, while we remain with old Red Heart tonight, and go on to the motte to-morrow."

"I am under your guidance, Cody," said Lord Elstone, and he turned away to watch the squaws preparing the evening meal for their braves, while Buffalo Bill went in search of the chief, Red Heart.

Ten minutes after, three Indian warriors mounted their horses and struck off across the prairie, slowly following the trail of the Death Shot.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE GRAVE REVEALED.

With the early morn, and after a substantial breakfast—for the scout always traveled well provided with provisions—three horsemen rode out of the Indian camp and struck a trail to the southward, followed by the Indian village, which the chief intended moving toward the head-waters of the Republican River.

The three who left the village were Buffalo Bill, Lord Elstone and Red Heart, the latter having determined to accompany his paleface guests as far as the lonely motte where were buried the remains of Lord Walter Elstone.

A ride of a few hours brought the small party to the motte.

As they drew near, Buffalo Bill said in a low voice, as though recalling the remembrance with sadness:

"I knew your brother well, Lord Elstone, for I gave him his first lesson in prairie-craft, and he was such an apt pupil that he was wont to go often alone on a hunt."

"When killed, however, he had two companions, I believe?" asked Lord Elstone, gazing with deep interest upon the small grove of timber they were approaching.

"Two dead bodies were found near him, and they were evil characters, well known on the border; all three were scalped and stripped of most of their clothing, and this caused the report that Indians had done the deed."

"As soon as I heard of the sad affair, through an old guide, I came here and buried the bodies, and, some time afterward, brought a headboard I had carved out with my knife, and placed it at your brother's grave; but, though I made diligent search, I could never discover Indian traces near the motte, and at the time of

the murder, there were no redskin bands seen in the vicinity, so I always believed that white men had done the deed and tried to leave the impression that the Pawnees had been the perpetrators."

"And the motive?"

"Was robbery, of course, for your brother unfortunately carried about with him considerable money, wore diamond studs, sleeve buttons and a ring of great value."

"It was wrong in him to do so, and I agree with you that they cost him his life, if he lies dead yonder; but we will soon know."

A ride of a few minutes more brought them to the motte, and beneath a large tree, Buffalo Bill pointed out three graves, one with an ingeniously carved board at the head of it.

To this one Lord Elstone advanced, and, dismounting, stood with uncovered head before it, while two Indian warriors came out of a thicket near by and joined the party.

They were the same who had left the camp of Red Heart the evening before.

"And the Antelope, where is he?" asked the scout, in the Pawnee language.

"The Antelope follows the trail of the Death Shot toward the setting sun," answered one of the braves.

"Ah! he has doubtless gone toward his mine in Colorado; did the Death Shot come here?" asked Buffalo Bill.

In answer, the Indians turned and pointed at the ground near the grave, and understanding his gesture the scout stepped forward and looked closely around him.

"Yes, here is the track of his horse, and, my lord, look there!"

The nobleman turned quickly at the loud tone of Buffalo Bill, and his eye fell upon the other side of the grave, which had lately been disturbed.

With his long knife Buffalo Bill quickly threw aside the earth and soon came to a small cavity, from which it was evident that a small package of some kind had been taken.

"This looks decidedly suspicious, my lord, and if I mistake not, we are on the trail of your brother's murderer."

"I believe you are right; now let us see if poor Walter is really buried here," and he turned his eyes upon the inscription on the carved headboard, on which had been skillfully cut:

"Lord Walter Elstone,

"of England.

"Killed on this spot, 18—"

With a hatchet, he took from his saddle, and the knives of the Indians who aided him, the dirt was

quickly thrown from the grave, and soon the body was reached.

The skeleton only remained, for the flesh had mingled with the earth; but the bones were to tell the story whether Lord Walter Elstone had been buried there.

Tenderly the scout raised the skeleton hand and held it up.

It was the left hand and devoid of a thumb.

"Thus far it is correct; now the bones of the left leg, which I told you were broken," said Lord Elstone, almost in a whisper.

The scout took up the skeleton's left leg, and that corroborated the story of the thumbless left hand; there was no doubt that the grave contained the remains of Lord Walter Elstone, who had met a violent death in a land far away from his own England and the beautiful woman who had indeed to mourn her lover dead.

With white face and quivering form, the brother turned away, for before him lay all that was left of the one he had most dearly loved, and gladly would he, in the nobleness of his nature, have relinquished his proud title and estates to restore Lord Walter to life.

While Lord Elstone stood gazing out upon the prairie, Buffalo Bill gathered the bones together and placed them in a blanket, which was strapped on the back of one of the Indian ponies, for transportation to the fort, where a coffin would be provided to carry the remains to England, for burial in the Elstone family tomb.

"Now, my lord, I will leave you to return to the fort with these two Indian warriors, while I follow on the trail of Roy Kent, for I am determined to find out what brought him to this grave."

"Very well, Cody, and I will await you at the fort, for I have now another duty to perform in punishing my brother's murderer."

After a short rest, the party left the motte, Lord Elstone and the Indians returning toward the fort, and Buffalo Bill setting out alone on the trail of the Death Shot and the brave who had followed him.

For some hours after leaving the motte, Buffalo Bill continued on at an easy gallop, his splendid horse, Brigham, showing no signs of fatigue at the miles he cast behind him, and the trail plainly visible to the experienced eyes of the scout, especially as the Indian warrior on the track of the Death Shot had taken pains to leave as broad a trace as possible.

Toward the evening of the second day the scout approached the hills at a point where he knew there had once been a populous mining camp, but which was now almost wholly deserted, on account of the earth not "panning out" as had been expected.

Here and there, scattered through the hills, Buffalo Bill had heard that a miner had remained, hoping

against hope that a rich yield of the precious yellow metal would reward him for his days of toil.

And in these hills it was said that the man known as Death Shot had a mine in which he kept a man or two at work, and, as he seemed always to have money, it was believed that his lead at least paid him a revenue.

As he reached the foothills and began the ascent, Brigham suddenly gave a loud snort, which told the scout, as plain as words could have done, that there was something ahead to be on the alert for.

With his rifle in his hand and his eyes bent searchingly on all sides, Buffalo Bill urged his horse again forward at a slow pace, and the animal advanced with caution into a small canyon, when he came suddenly in sight of an object lying before him a hundred paces.

Drawing nearer to it, the scout recognized at a glance the dead pony that had been ridden by the Indian warrior Antelope.

A bullet wound was in the animal's head, showing the cause of his death, and his trappings yet remained upon him.

"Now to find the Antelope, whom I fear has fallen into harm," muttered the scout, and with every nerve on the alert, he advanced up the canyon, Brigham still showing signs of uneasiness.

"Ah!"

The single expression was caused by the keen eyes of the scout falling suddenly upon the form of a man lying upon the hillside.

In an instant he was beside him, and he saw that it was the Antelope, yet still living.

Placing his flask of liquor to the Indian's lips, he gave him a draught, and it temporarily revived him, though it was evident that he was beyond all aid, as a bullet wound pierced his brawny breast.

But the dark eyes opened, stared for a moment, and recognizing Buffalo Bill, the Antelope said, in a low tone:

"Antelope great brave, but he die now and go to happy hunting grounds."

"And who killed the Antelope?" asked Buffalo Bill.

"The Death Shot; bad paleface."

"I believe you; and he shot you, did he?"

"Death Shot lay on trail and shoot pony; Antelope run on Death Shot here, and he kill me, too; then Death Shot laugh and go 'way."

"I'll change that laugh for him yet," muttered the scout, and he examined the wound of the Indian, who said, faintly:

"No good now; Antelope will die, but he great brave."

"Yes, and your people shall know you died like a chief. When did the Antelope see the Death Shot?"

"When the sun was yonder," and he tried to point toward the eastern horizon, but the effort was too much for him, and while the agony he suffered caused not a gasp, he began chanting his wild death-song.

With folded arms, Buffalo Bill stood near him, his face stern and determined, and, as he gazed on the dying savage, he had a wicked, revengeful look in his dark eyes that betokened no good to Roy Kent.

Gradually the death-song grew fainter and fainter, until the lips ceased to move, and the Indian warrior lay forever at rest.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HIDDEN CAVE.

Folding the blanket of the dead brave around him, and making a couch of his trappings, Buffalo Bill placed the body in a crevice of the rocks, and with his knife dug the earth above it, thus forming a grave.

"Now, Brigham, we will see what there is ahead to interest us," said the scout, mounting his faithful horse, who had been making a rich repast off the juicy grass that grew in the canyon.

After a short search, the trail of Roy Kent was found, leading on into the hills, and, following it, the scout continued on until nightfall, when he went into camp.

But with the first dawn of day, he was again on the trail, and in a few hours came to a halt at a rugged hillside.

It was the old mining camp, which in its golden days had had several times visited; but now all was desolation and desertion.

A few rickety old shanties yet remained, but they held no occupants, and not a sign of a human being could be seen around.

Here, too, the trail seemed to end, for no trace of the on-shod hoofs was seen leading elsewhere.

On the hillside was a ruined shanty, and into this the scout rode and dismounted. Before him was a tunnel-like cave leading back into the mountain, and the entrance to which was concealed by a canvas covering which had once done duty as an army tent.

Hitching his horse within, Buffalo Bill looked to his weapons, and boldly, though cautiously, stepped within the cave.

But all was darkness beyond, and he at first seemed to read striking a match, as it would place him in full view should an enemy be concealed back in the dark recesses.

After a pause, he groped his way forward on his hands and knees until he had gone a considerable distance, and then he struck a match.

The light showed him that the tunnel continued on,

and large enough for a horse to pass through, and then he knew that it was by that way the Death Shot had gone, thereby destroying his trail.

"I'm better on foot here than mounted," he muttered, and continued on by the light of matches which he struck from time to time.

After going some distance, he knew that the tunnel was turning off to the right, and just here he paused, as several different passageways were visible, leading off in various directions, and he knew not which one to take.

"Guess I'll toss up for luck," he said, half in earnest, and while hesitating what to do, there came to his ears a distinct groan.

"Ah! I am about to make a discovery, but I hope I'll not discover more than I can handle," he muttered, and he moved forward slowly in the direction of the sound, which was now momentarily repeated.

He had gone but a short distance when he felt that he was in the presence of a human being, though he dare not strike a match to see.

"Who is here in distress?" he asked, as the pitiful moaning was heard only a few paces away.

At the sound of his voice the groaning ceased, and in faint tones came the reply:

"Oh, if you are human, take me out of this hell of misery."

Instantly Buffalo Bill lighted a match, and there before him lay a man, his hands pressed upon his side, and red with the life blood that oozed through them from a wound.

"I will willingly carry you from this, if you will only show me the way," and he bent over the wounded man.

"My torch lies yonder; there, now light it and raise me up."

The scout did as directed, and lighting the pine knot, which served as a torch, he turned and carefully raised the man in his arms, and under his direction bore him through the tunnel, by a different route from the one by which he had come.

A walk of a hundred yards and daylight shone ahead, and the next moment they came out of the cavern into a stoutly built log cabin, built against the side of the hill.

That it was the home of the miner, for such he was, was evident, as a cot of skins was in one corner, a few cooking utensils stood on the large hearth, and a rifle and pistols hung on a rack near the door, which was opposite the cave.

There was no window in the cabin, only crevices in between the logs to give light, and the stout door was closed and barred.

Placing the man upon the cot, Buffalo Bill unbarred

and threw the door open, and the bright sunlight streamed within.

"Now, my man," and he brought his flask into requisition, "drink some of this and it will refresh you, and then I will look at your wound, and see what can be done for you," said the scout, cheerfully.

"It is no use; his knife went deep in here; but are you not Buffalo Bill, the Army Scout?"

"Yes."

"I have seen you at McPherson and also at Cheyenne. I am glad you have come, for I shall be avenged on the man who has placed me here."

"Now to your wound, and we will talk afterward."

"It's no use, pard, for I'm done for; he strikes with an iron hand, and my chips is called for; but it will better my dying hour to know that he is sarcumvented in his deviltry."

"To whom do you refer?" asked the scout, though he felt that he could answer his own question correctly.

"I refer to that imp o' sin, Roy Kent."

"I thought so."

"You know him, then?"

"Yes; I followed his trail to this mine, and left some more of his red work in a grave behind me."

"Is that so? Well, he's done for me, and no mistake. You see, he are the superintendent of this mine."

The scout smiled, for the mine looked little like needing a superintendent, and seeing it, the miner continued:

"It do seem funny, I'll allow, pard, but the joke hain't all visible yet; you see, as much as I knows o' the case, the boss was sent out here by those who didn't want him in St. Louis, and was paid so much for workin' this old mine, which never did pan out good. Well, he hired me to do the workin', and I got enough to make it pay a leetle, until three days ago I struck it rich."

"What?" asked the scout, in surprise.

"True, I struck it richer than a bank, and there's heaps o' the yaller metal back in that hole you took me out of, for there's a little creek runs underground, and the dust is thar thick and no mistake."

"You surprise me."

"I surprised myself, pard, and I was runnin' over to tell the boss, when he come and I let him into the secret, and told him as how his old uncle in St. Louis would be delighted, even if he was what you call a millionaire; you see, I knows the family, for the old man and I was cronies in the long ago in California flush days."

"I fear you are talking too much; wait until I dress your wound and you have rested," said the scout, kindly.

"I tell yer 'tain't no use, Bill; I'm a passin' rapid toward Jordan, an' ef I don't let loose my tongue tackle, I'll git acrost afore I can sarcumvent that devil, Roy

Kent, and he's up to dirty work, I tell yer. I must tall d for I'm bound on revenge for the trick he sarved me." lay

"I will listen, then, my friend."

"That's what I calls on yer to do, an' yer've got old do some workin' to revenge me, too; you bet. Now, as the was sayin', the boss has a rich uncle in St. Louis, with has got a mighty angel-like gal, an' says Roy to m d says he:

"'Buck'—you see as how my name is Buck, leastw that hain't it, for I are a liar, but I'll let it go at the an' I jedge Gabriel better call me by it when he toots h horn at Jedgment, for my raal name I didn't act rig by when I was young, and I don't want no such a fell as I be to be buried under the name of my good fath and mother had; bless 'em, they have gone, too, and guesses as how I helped to hurry 'em to ther grave."

The tears came in the staring eyes as he recalled h parents, and the scout seemed deeply moved as he gaze on the flushed, feverish face, and held the rough hand his own.

After a moment the miner continued:

"But I'm off the trail, Bill; I was telling you abo Andrew Melton, the uncle o' the boss o' this mine; v was boys together, and Andrew pulled me out o' t millrace one day when I was hastenin' like ther mischi to Jedgment, and I never forgot him for it, though m life has been a leetle rough since them days.

"Well, Roy says to me, says he:

"'You've struck it rich, then, hev yer, Buck?'

"Says I to Roy, I says:

"'I have thet.'

"'Good!' says he; 'then I'm a made man and o Melton shall not know the mine ever panned out a re cent, for he believed it worthless when he sent me her four years ago.'

"Says I:

"'Boss, I guesses as how the old man will know.'

"'And how will he know?' he axed, and turned o me quick.

"'Wa-al, I'll tell him,' was my outspoken remark.

"He turned white as a ghost, Bill; but he didn't sa nothin', only told me to show him the lead I had struck and like a fool I went back into the tunnel with him and showed him the dust, an' his eyes jist glittered lik a snake's, an' I then seen my danger, for I'd left th shootin' irons in ther cabin here.

"Well, he was on me in an instant, shoutin' like wild man:

"'You'll tell, will yer, you cursed fool?'

"I'm no child, Bill, but that devil has more strengt than one man oughter have an' be human, and he held me in his arms an' druv his knife in here twice; yos sees the holes the blade made.

"I dropped down, an', afearin' he would strike again played awful dead, and he looked over the lead, utterin' to himself about goin' to St. Louis, and buying a old man for a song, and he do sing well, I'll allow, then comin' back and workin' the mine for himself; that wasn't all he said, for he threatened to have the deeds o' this mine in his name if he had to kill old Elton and marry the daughter."

"The villain!" exclaimed Buffalo Bill, indignantly.

"He are worse than that, Bill, and you see how I will be happy if I sarcumvent him, even ef I be dead."

Buffalo Bill did not exactly see it in that light, but he understood the old miner's reasoning, and that was sufficient.

"Buck, I promise you faithfully to go to St. Louis, if I live, and not a dollar of benefit shall Roy Kent ever come from this mine, and, when I strike him hardest, I'll remember you, for it is life and death between that man and myself."

"You do me proud to hear you say so, Bill; but he is a man every bit o' him, so look out; whar he aims a bullet it goes, and no mistake, and he can out-Injun a man in cunning, and he's game clean through. I know him, and I gives you warning with death a-creeping over me."

"I thank you, Buck, and I will be careful, for I well know he is no common man; but now, old fellow, tell me if I can do anything for you?"

"Nary; the old folks is dead, and I guess my brothers and sisters do not wish to be reminded of me, for I brought only misery and shame upon them."

Buffalo Bill turned upon the speaker with surprise, for his voice had suddenly grown stronger, and he had wholly dropped the dialect of the border.

"Yes," he continued, "I was a hard case, and went through the bad, in spite of all that was around to make me a man."

"I drank hard, gambled, and, it is the old story, Bill I took a life and fled to save my own."

"Yes, there is one to whom you can bear a message, send one; she was the one woman I allus loved, and she loved me."

"After my flight, her father forced her to marry a bad man; here is her likeness and name; mine is beneath it."

But he had not the strength to take from around his neck a miniature likeness set in gold, and the scout cut the leather thong that bound it, and placed it in the hands of the dying miner.

It was the picture of a young girl, with large, sad blue eyes, and a face of rare beauty; upon the reverse side of the gold case was engraved:

"ALFRED BUCK

"to

"MAY CURTIS.

"October 1, 18—."

The miner turned his burning eyes an instant upon the young face, and said quickly and in hoarse tones:

"Take it, Bill."

After a long pause, he continued:

"Any one in St. Louis—that is, those of a quarter of a century ago—will tell you who May Curtis married; give her this, Bill, and tell her Alf Buck never married, and died with this by him."

His features worked convulsively, and after a spasm of pain he seemed to rest easier and dropped off to sleep.

For a long time Buffalo Bill sat by his side, noticing that his sands of life were rapidly running out, and then he arose and paced the floor, more impressed by the sad scene than he cared to admit.

"Bill!"

The scout started and advanced to the cot and bent over the dying man.

The eyes were sunken now, their brightness had gone, and the voice was very weak.

The scout raised the hand of the dying miner, now clammy with the death-sweat.

"I'm going over the river, Bill; you'll follow without fail."

Another word trembled on the lips, but it was never uttered, for the icy chill of death touched the heart and stilled forever its beating.

Deeply impressed, the scout gazed down upon the calm, dead face; but the next instant he was upon his feet, like a tiger at bay, for there rung in his ears the threatening words:

"Buffalo Bill, your time has come!"

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE DUEL.

Through the open doorway, just about ten feet from him, the scout beheld a horseman, a rifle pointed straight at him.

That horseman was Roy Kent, his face stormy with passion, and in his eyes was plainly a determination to kill.

His enemy held him at an advantage, for the scout knew that his slightest movement to defend himself would bring the fatal shot, and he well knew that Roy Kent deserved the name of Death Shot.

And it was that advantage that caused Roy Kent to momentarily play with the man he intended to kill. Buffalo Bill thought with lightning rapidity, and though he remained as still as a statue, his eyes flashed about him for some vantage, or means to escape. In an instant

he saw it; a chance, and yet a slight one, yet any risk for life was better than a certainty of death.

As he had faced about, still seated upon the cot, his left foot was thrust forward, and its toe was now touching the open door; then with a sudden impulse, he sent the door to with a bang.

There came the shot immediately and the bullet tore off the edge of the heavy door, but it saved the life of Buffalo Bill, who instantly threw the heavy bar in place and then sprang to a crack in the cabin, rifle in hand.

But, Roy Kent saw at a glance his danger, and had at once driven the spurs into the flanks of his horse and dashed out of sight around a hill.

As if making up his mind to his course of action, as soon as he discovered that he could not get a shot at his enemy, Buffalo Bill lighted the pine torch and darted back into the tunnel.

He readily found his way through the tunnel, and in five minutes made his exit into the tumbled down shanty by which he had entered.

His faithful horse gave a low neigh of delight at sight of him, and the next moment the scout was in the saddle, for he had no desire to be cooped up in a hole in the hill, as he did not know how many companions might be with Death Shot.

As he reached the open hillside he gave a sigh of relief and muttered:

"Now I am free and may the best man win."

But it did not seem as though Death Shot was anticipating, or desiring an open field meeting with his adversary, for nowhere could he be seen, and darkness was coming rapidly on.

"Come, old fellow, I'll give you your supper and water, for you deserve it, and then I'll scout around on foot and see what that devil is after," said Buffalo Bill to his horse.

After a short search, he found good water and grass, and removing the saddle and bridle from his horse, lariatied him out to feed.

It was now dark, and, after a light supper the scout shouldered his rifle and started cautiously forward.

He had gone but a short distance when there appeared before him a red glare, and in a few moments more he came in full sight of the miner's cabin in flames.

Cautiously he crept nearer and nearer, and then looked on, hoping to see Roy Kent come out into the light from some hiding-place.

"He evidently thinks that I am in the cave, and he will smoke me out," he muttered, and, with the patience of an Indian, he sat down to wait for a sight of his enemy.

But the cabin burned down, the flames died out, and the wary Death Shot had not shown himself.

"Well, I'll not lose a night's rest on your account, Mr. Kent, but return to the canyon, and in the morning strike your trail."

So saying, he went back to the little valley where he had left Brigham, and wrapping himself in his blanket was soon fast asleep.

With the day dawn he was upon his feet, and mounting his horse rode toward the cave in the hillside.

The ashes still held a few smoldering coals, but no sign of life was around, and in one heap he recognized the charred bones of the miner.

"He's cremated old Buck, that's certain," said the scout, sadly, and he rode along the hillside to the ruins of the shanty that covered the other entrance to the tunnel.

Still no trace of his enemy could be found, and riding a wide circuit around the base of the hill, he crossed the trail of iron-shod hoofs leading away from the deserted mines.

"It is his track, and made last night; he has a lead on me, but I will follow him," said the scout, and he urged his horse on in the trail left by the steed of Death Shot.

The trail led to the northward toward Fort Sedgewick, but then branched off eastward in the direction of McPherson, and Buffalo Bill took no particular notice now to follow the track of the man he pursued, as he felt certain that he had fearlessly returned to the Post.

It was a long ride, but Brigham was a good traveler and carried his master to his destination.

The sun went down when the scout was some miles from the Post, and only the saloons and gambling houses were open when he rode along the street toward the cabin where he expected to find Lord Elstone.

As he was passing by a brightly lighted saloon, where he knew to be one of the worst dens on the border, the scout suddenly heard voices raised in anger, and, from the words of the speakers, it was evident that a fight was imminent.

"I should know that voice," he said, as he drew near and listened for an instant, while there came to his ears in clear, boyish tones the words:

"He insulted the girl, and she is my sister, and if I don't fight me he's a coward."

Instantly Buffalo Bill threw himself from his horse, hitched him to a post nearby, and entered the saloon just as a deep voice cried:

"You've got to fight the boy or me, so choose between us."

The next moment Buffalo Bill stood in the doorway, but the excitement was so great that his coming was hardly noticed.

It was a long, narrow room, rude in structure, with a bar extending across the further end of it, and

rough-looking men standing behind it, and indifferently surveying the scene.

In the end nearest the doorway on the street were tables and chairs, a few of them occupied with men too well accustomed to scenes of violence and bloodshed to be disturbed by a war of words; when the time came for action they would move out of range, but not before.

There were present nearly half a hundred wild-looking men, a few soldiers from the fort, and several shabbily-attired individuals who were well known as sportsmen, or professional gamblers.

But the center of attraction, as the scout stood gazing, was a youth of perhaps nineteen, with slender form, well dressed, and wearing a slouch hat that shaded his features.

His right hand rested upon the butt of a pistol, his eyes were flashing, and his mouth was set with determined recklessness, which his light mustache failed to hide.

Before him, and also in an attitude of defense, stood Lord Elstone, cool, yet decided.

"He says he didn't insult yer sister, and he won't fight a boy," cried one of the men, who, apparently a peacemaker, was secretly urging on the combat.

"A boy, am I? Well, I'll prove to him that I can act man's part," cried the youth, indignantly.

"I didn't know the gal had a brother," said one present.

"Well, you know it now, and one who is determined to punish her insulter," responded the young man, his hand still resting threateningly upon his pistol.

"My boy, if you have a quarrel against me, we will settle it elsewhere; I am no advocate for a barroom brawl," and Lord Elstone attempted to move toward the door, but half a dozen burly forms confronted him, and one, who appeared to act as leader, cried:

"No, pard, it is fight or backdown out here on the border, and ef you fight and kills the boy, your troubles is begun, while ef yer backs, why, then, we'll make it lively for yer."

Lord Elstone glanced around him as if to catch a friendly face; but the soldiers, the only ones who appeared to know him, looked away, for they dreaded the crowd there assembled too much to aid him.

"Men, I am not to be bullied into doing that which I do not care to do, so stand aside, for I pass out of here."

There was a certain ring in the nobleman's voice that proved that he would be a dangerous man when brought to bay, and a few knew it; but the rest were so blinded by drink that they failed to see that they might catch a tartar, and moved forward, their hands on their revolvers, and brave in their numbers, determined to at once push matters to a crisis.

"Gentlemen, you are too fast by far!"

All turned quickly at the cool, cutting tones, and a dozen voices cried in chorus:

"Buffalo Bill!"

"Yes, I am Buffalo Bill, and just in time to prevent a disgraceful scene, for that gentleman is my friend, and the man who raises hand against him has to fight me."

There was not a man present, with one or two exceptions, who did not know the scout, and they shrank back at the thought of coming to close quarters with him, and several said in an apologetic tone:

"We didn't know he was a pard of yours, Bill."

"Well, you know it now," and turning to Lord Elstone, who seemed greatly relieved at his coming, he continued:

"Will you go with me, my lord?"

"Willingly, Cody; I dropped in here to see something of your border drinking saloons, and this youth followed me, accusing me of insulting his sister, and demanding that I should fight a duel with him here, an invitation I decidedly refused," said the nobleman, in a half-amused tone.

Just as Buffalo Bill was about to reply, and many present seemed to anticipate what he would say, and were moving toward the bar, a burly, heavily-bearded and giant-formed ruffian confronted him.

"That chap may be a friend o' yours, pard, but that don't scare me, for I'm ther boss o' ther Rocky Mountains, and the boys call me a terror; you might hev heerd o' me."

"I've heard of a good many hard characters from the Rockies, but I think you could rake the pile," was the calm, almost indifferent reply.

Instantly the bully's face grew white with rage, while he shouted:

"Ef yer hain't heerd of Red Reid, it's time you did, an' yer shall feel o' him, too, for I takes up this yer quarrel, as I told ther boy I would see him through his trouble, an' ef yonder fancy rooster didn't fight him, he'd hev to tackle me; so as you has tuk his part, why, we'll git up a leetle fun atween us fer the boys, for I'm a biter, I am, from the Rockies."

The huge bully danced around as if for admiration, and all present feeling now that trouble was sure to come, began to give the two men space, excepting Lord Elstone, who maintained his stand by the side of the scout.

"Yes, I'm a biter, I am," yelled the desperado, again.

"Then be careful, for you might bite off more than you can chew," was the calm retort; but in spite of his seeming indifference, all knew that Buffalo Bill meant instantaneous "business" if crowded, and was the

quickest man "on the draw" along the border, and by far the best shot.

"Pard, throw me out a pint o' pizen, ra-al tangle-foot," yelled the desperado, and the barkeeper brought the liquor, and it was dashed off at a few swallows.

"Gentlemen, will you join my friend and self in a drink before we go?" and Buffalo Bill glanced over the crowd pleasantly, and moved toward the bar.

But the bully immediately confronted him, and said, threateningly:

"Ef yer takes yer drink, pard, yer has ter walk o' me."

Hardly were the words out of his mouth when an iron hand was upon his throat, and the next instant, by a display of almost superhuman strength, Buffalo Bill had hurled the bully into the furthest corner of the saloon.

"Stand aside, all!"

It was a command in the scout's voice, and in an instant, like a mad tiger, the huge desperado arose and rushed upon his enemy, his broad knife in one hand and a revolver in the other.

There were wild cries, rushing of feet, overturning of chairs and tables, and then two rapid shots, a loud yell and a heavy fall.

A moment after the smoke and dust drifted away, and Buffalo Bill again said:

"Now, gentlemen, we will have our drink."

Upon the floor, a bullet through his brain, lay Red Reid, the terror of the Rocky Mountains.

With the coolness so characteristic of bordermen, the whole party stepped up to the bar and dashed off their drinks, and as Buffalo Bill turned to go, he said to the barkeeper:

"Dick, have that fellow buried, and I'll pay for it."

"I'll do it, Bill, and he be a starter for the new parson to try his prayers on," answered the drink dispenser, rather delighted at the popularity given to his saloon by the affair that had just taken place.

"But where is the boy?" asked Buffalo Bill, as, with Lord Elstone, he moved toward the door.

"Thet youngster jist lit out, when you comed in, Bill—'kase why I do not know," answered one of the crowd.

"It is just as well; come, my lord," and, so saying, the two friends left the saloon together.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TELL-TALE SOUVENIR.

Upon arriving near his cabin, Buffalo Bill rode away to look after the comfort of his horse, leaving Lord Elstone to enter alone.

But hardly had the scout dismounted when he heard the sharp crack of a pistol, and then a stifled cry as if for help.

Quickly he rushed toward the cabin, from whence the sounds came, and suddenly came upon two men struggling together, or, rather, one was holding the other firmly in his strong arms.

"Ah, Cody, I've caught the youngster; help me to secure him."

It was Lord Elstone who spoke, and the "youngster" referred to was the boy who had sought to fight a duel with the nobleman in the saloon.

Grasping the youth in his powerful arms, Buffalo Bill raised him up bodily, and while Lord Elstone opened the door, he bore him into the cabin where the light was burning.

"Oh, let me go! please let me go!" pleaded the boy earnestly, and, touched by his appeal, Lord Elstone said:

"He stepped out from the shadow of the cabin, calling to me to draw and defend myself, fired, a bullet being turned by a military decoration I wore. Being unable to get my pistol out of my holster, I sprang upon him and secured him; but let him go now."

"No, I will first know who and what he is," said the scout, firmly, and, unmindful of the pleading of the youth, he dragged him to the light.

One glance into that white face, and he cried.

"Wild Nell, by all that's holy."

The nobleman at once sprang forward and glanced at the disguised woman, from whose lips the mustache had fallen in the struggle, and the sombrero having dropped on the floor her hair was seen bound up in a knot on her head.

As if overwhelmed with emotion, she sank into a chair, her face in her hands, while she burst into tears.

For a few moments the two men stood silently regarding her, and then, in kindly tones, Lord Elstone asked: "How have I injured you that you should seek my life?"

Drying her tears, she looked straight in his face, and answered firmly:

"You came to my cabin to ask me if aught had been heard of Buffalo Bill, and you saw upon my neck the locket," and she drew from her bosom a star and crescent of diamonds, with the reverse side arranged for a miniature.

"True, I recognized the locket, and it was but natural that I should ask regarding it."

"I declined to tell you, and you said that I wore the which had been won by foul murder, and I gave you the lie direct."

"True, and your sex prevented your punishment for the insult," was the cool reply of the Englishman.

"So I knew, and, angered by your words, I disguised

self as a man and sought you out at the saloon, which I had seen you enter."

"Thank God that I was not drawn into any trouble with you; but your refusal to answer my questions relating this locket, caused me, naturally, to think you were from whence it came."

"I do know, and I will tell you, only it turned my heart to bitterness to be thought a thief," said the girl, passionately.

"Pardon me, I meant not to offend you, and I will explain my interest in the matter, for I came to this country to find whether it was true that my brother had been cruelly murdered by savages, and, if so, to bear his remains back to England for burial, after having, if possible, brought to punishment his murderers."

"When my brother came to America he wore that watch you now have on, and suspended by the same chain around his neck."

Wild Nell's face now turned to a deadly hue, and, lost in a whisper, she asked:

"Can there not be some mistake? Can it not have been one like this?"

"There is no mistake, for at a glance, as I saw it on your neck the other day, I now see marks which could not have been by accident placed in one of similar workmanship."

"And those marks are?" asked the girl, anxiously, while Buffalo Bill moved forward with increased interest.

"First, the crescent is the crest of our house in England, and the star, of another noble family, and the seal has been the luckstone of the Elstones for generations; you see it in the center of the diamond crescent, while the emerald is the luckstone of the family whose crest the star represents, and you observe it in the center, there."

He put his hand forward as though to touch the costly watch, but with a startled cry, Wild Nell shrunk away from him, saying:

"No, no, no! do not take it."

"At least allow me to look at it; 'tis not its value I prize it for, and you shall have its equivalent."

The woman drew herself proudly up, and replied:

"Nor do I prize it for its intrinsic value, sir, but on account of the one who gave it to me."

"I will restore it to you, if you will allow me to look at it more closely."

"Never!"

"Why, Nell, what ails you?" asked Buffalo Bill, in surprise at her strange manner; but not noticing her behavior, Lord Elstone continued:

"There is a miniature likeness of a lady on the reverse side."

"There is not," was the emphatic rejoinder.

The nobleman looked puzzled, and said, thoughtfully:

"Can I be mistaken in the identity of the locket?"

"You certainly are."

"And there is no miniature on the reverse side?"

"Yes, there is, but not of a woman."

"Ah," and Lord Elstone looked toward Buffalo Bill who had given vent to the exclamation.

"And the likeness is an oval one?"

"Yes."

"Around the rim it is studded with small opals?"

"Yes," replied Wild Nell, yet it was with evident reluctance.

"And a man's likeness is in the locket now?" suddenly asked Buffalo Bill, with apparent indifference, and the woman's answer came promptly:

"Yes."

But then, as if feeling that she had perhaps committed herself too far, she continued:

"I will not tell you whose likeness is in the locket; it was given me by one I hold most dear, and for his sake I wore it."

"His sake," muttered the scout, and there was something in the tone that caused the paleness of the woman to increase.

"How long have you had it, may I ask?" urged Lord Elstone.

"That I decline to answer, also," was the almost defiant reply.

"Nell," and the scout stepped toward her, "do not think that either Lord Elstone or myself believe that you know why you should not possess that locket; we think you innocent in the case, and to prove it, will not make our discovery of it public, so as to force the truth; but we are anxious to know one thing, and that is—who gave it to you?"

"Bill, there is no power on earth that will make me tell."

"So be it; let us drop the subject, and I will see you in safety to your cabin, but I warn you not to attempt the life of Lord Elstone again or we will quarrel."

"That is past, for I now know how he felt regarding the locket, and I do not blame him; good-evening, my lord, and do not let us be enemies."

She held out her hand and Lord Elstone took it coldly and bowed.

The next moment she left the cabin with Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOME OF WILD NELL.

The home of the strange woman was reached and she turned and said, in a low tone:

"It was kind of you to see me home, Bill; good-night."

She held forth her hand, but the scout, instead of taking it, said, firmly:

"I am coming in, Wild Nell; I wish to have a talk with you."

The woman bit her lips as if vexed, but silently placed the key in the lock and threw the door open.

It was a double cabin, that is, contained but two rooms, both of fair size, and back of the house was a small stable, in which were three horses, all known to be splendid animals, and which Wild Nell cared for herself.

The room which they entered did service as sitting and bedroom, and the adjoining one was where she cooked and ate her meals, for Wild Nell did all of her own work.

Around the walls of the sitting-room were hung a number of paintings and pencil sketches, the work of the fair occupant.

A guitar lay upon a sofa near by; a rack with books occupied one corner of the well-dressed skins of the wildcat, panther and antelope skillfully worked, while mats of buffalo and wolfskins covered the floor.

Several rifles of various patterns, and richly mounted with silver, were in racks on the walls and, knives and pistols, bows and arrows, Indian tomahawks and coup-sticks were scattered here and there, with saddles for both sexes, fancy bridles, lariats and male and feminine clothing completed the assortment and furnishing of the room.

It was the first time Buffalo Bill had ever been in the cabin, and he looked around him curiously, while he smilingly remarked:

"You have a perfect curiosity shop here, Nell."

"Yet nothing that is not useful; be seated, please."

The scout threw himself upon a chair, and Wild Nell, taking a seat near him, said, simply:

"Well?"

"Nell, you are a curiosity yourself; a perfect wonder, and I do not know what to make of you," said the scout, as if at a loss to know how to begin his conversation.

"I am a wretched, sinful woman, Bill," was the bitter reply.

"You should not be, for you have strange beauty; you are educated and refined in your tastes, and can adorn any society——"

"But the border suits me best. As you might add, I am the best shot, the best rider, and the wildest she-devil on the plains."

The woman spoke with great bitterness, and the scout hastily added:

"Those are accomplishments highly prized here, Nell."

"In a man, yes; but not in a woman, Bill; yes, what I am, and a cruel fate still dogs my steps, driving me recklessly on to ruin."

"Do not speak thus, Wild Nell, for never I heard one whisper against your character."

"Why do you not say since I killed that man who slandered me one year ago, shortly after I came. Men only slander the weak and defenseless, Bill, those who do are cowards. Brave men never fight against women, be they what they may, for they have compassion with courage, and few know the dark temptations, and the miseries that often beset women, if I drag them down to a life of crime; none know what I have suffered, to become what I am."

"You lead a strange life, Nell, and I cannot account for it. Why you should give up friends and society, civilization to come here, I cannot understand."

The woman smiled grimly, and remained silent, until after a while, Buffalo Bill asked:

"Pardon me, Nell, but what is Roy Kent to you?"

In an instant Wild Nell was upon her feet, her face blazing as they turned upon the scout, who remained seated and regarding her calmly.

"What is Roy Kent to me? Ha! ha! ha!"

The voice was hoarse with passion subdued, and laugh was forced, and the scout knew it.

"Yes, a few days ago you saved my life by leveling your pistol at the heart of Roy Kent, and even drove old Red Heart in the midst of his warriors; but when that man commanded you to desist, like a child, obedient to a parent, you obeyed; how, may I ask, did he exert that influence over a woman of such dare-devil pluck and independence as you are?"

"Buffalo Bill, you have crossed the threshold of a man that you shall not see beyond. I admire you greatly, I respect you, and I would risk my life to save you from harm, but never question me again on that subject."

"My past is as though it were in the grave; I live only for the future and revenge!"

She hissed out the last word through her even teeth, and her whole form trembled with emotion.

"Revenge upon whom?" persisted the scout, as if he would lead her on.

"Upon Roy Kent!"

The name burst from her lips in spite of herself, and it left Buffalo Bill again in a puzzled maze, and he glanced absently around the room, when his eyes fell upon a portrait.

It was the portrait of a woman, and the frame was skillfully made of black crepe, the face was that of a matron of thirty-five, and very beautiful, while in every feature was a look that was familiar to the scout, yet

could not tell when and where he had ever met the original.

He arose and regarded the portrait attentively, and in tried to fathom who it represented, and failing, he asked:

"Who is this, Nell?"

"My mother."

It was all she said, and there was that in her tone which caused the scout to ask her no more, and, thinking he had no right to question her further, he said, pleasantly:

"Well, Nell, you can always trust me as your friend, and if I can serve you, call upon me, but ere I go please answer me one question."

"I will if I can," and the maiden stepped in front of the scout.

"Where is Roy Kent now?"

"He is here to answer for himself!"

With a loud cry Wild Nell turned to behold in the half-open doorway the tall form and handsome face of Roy Kent, the Death Shot, and, as he held his revolver in his hand, she sprang forward, and threw herself upon the broad breast of Buffalo Bill, just as he had quickly dragged his own trusty weapon from his belt.

CHAPTER X.

STAR-EYE.

An instant the positions of the three remained unchanged in that terrible scene, and then Buffalo Bill said, sternly:

"If you desire that it shall be a fight to the death between us, sir, I am at your service if you will leave this cabin."

"No, I hold the advantage, and you are too dangerous a man to let up on, so I'll dictate terms."

"No, no, there shall be no fight between you two; leave this cabin, I command you, Roy Kent!" cried Wild Nell, her eyes flashing fire, and her face determined.

"Nell, don't be a fool; it is for me to command, not you," said Roy Kent, quietly.

"It is for you to obey, and you shall!" was the defiant reply.

"Oh, ho! you then are taking the reins in your own hands?"

"Yes, and I shall hold them for this once, for you two men shall not fight here."

"There will be no trouble if Mr. Cody will pledge himself to do as I dictate," was the rejoinder of Roy Kent, who never once took his eyes off the scout or lowered his threatening revolver.

"I follow the dictation of no man, and though, as you say, you have the drop on me, if Wild Nell will step

aside I'll settle the matter now and here," was the fearless retort of Buffalo Bill.

"Ha! ha! you forget the name I bear, and that my bullet would pierce your brain ere you could level your revolver. No, I will offer you terms, and, if you accept them, there need be no trouble between us."

"But I wish trouble between us; you made a false accusation against me the other day, and sought to have me put out of the way, and I have determined that it shall be your life or mine."

"You fired at me a few days since at the mining cabin, and it will be my time next, and if I cannot track you to the gallows I am very much mistaken."

"Hold, Buffalo Bill; tell me, was the miner, Buck, alive and conscious when you saw him in the cabin at the cavern?"

"He was."

"Did he make any confession to you before he died?" and as Roy Kent asked the question he seemed to be much excited.

"He did."

Roy Kent gazed an instant in silence at the fearless man before him and then said:

"It was my intention to offer you your life, if you would swear to leave this border, never to return; but now, after what you have just said, I will kill you."

The face of Buffalo Bill never changed, although he saw deadly intent to keep his word in the eyes of the man before him; but Wild Nell tried to shelter the scout still more with her slender form.

But every muscle of the scout was ready, and every nerve on the alert, and should Roy Kent for once miss his aim and belie his name as Death Shot, a terrible struggle must follow.

"Buffalo Bill, you have just one minute to live."

The voice was calm, the face merciless, as Roy Kent stood with finger on trigger.

The scout's hand was on the butt of his revolver, and every movement of his enemy was watched with painful interest, for all hung upon that first shot.

As for Wild Nell, she was livid with excitement, and held herself firmly between that threatening muzzle and the scout.

"Coward! Meet him like a man. If you will, I'll give the word to fire," cried the girl.

"No I know what he is, and I have too much at stake to risk a combat with him on equal terms; he shall die within thirty seconds."

"The Death Shot speaks with a crooked tongue."

All started, and in spite of his nerve, Roy Kent turned half around at the strange voice behind him.

And that one movement, slight as it was, changed the position of affairs, for Buffalo Bill's revolver fairly

leaped from its belt, and in the flash of a thought, covered the heart of Roy Kent, and the two men now stood on equal terms, their weapons leveled, their fingers on the trigger.

Why they did not fire, neither knew, but each watched the finger of the other, the one that rested upon the trigger, and the slightest tremor and both weapons would have been discharged.

So intently were they watching each other, the Death Shot aiming at the head of Buffalo Bill, over Wild Nell, and the scout at the heart of his foe, that they looked neither to the right nor left as a step was heard on the cabin floor, and a form glided into the room.

"The Death Shot's tongue speaks crooked; the great buffalo-killer shall not die."

The speaker aimed an arrow straight at the heart of Roy Kent, and the bow was drawn back with a force that would send the keen shaft through the man's body, did the bronzed fingers let slip their hold.

And the one who thus threatened Roy Kent was a young girl of scarcely seventeen, and an Indian.

She was graceful in form, and was possessed of a beauty seldom found in the Indian race, for her features were regular, her teeth white, and her eyes large and as bright as diamonds.

That she was the daughter of a chief her attire indicated, for she was dressed in the finest of buckskin, beautifully beaded, and her arms and neck were covered with silver ornaments.

Some time before, Buffalo Bill had rescued that maiden from the Sioux, who held her as a captive, and from that day she had devotedly loved the paleface scout, but kept her regard from every eye, as, Indian girl though she was, she would not let others see that she had given her heart to one who she knew cared not for her; but secretly she was wont to send the scout presents of beautifully worked moccasins, leggins of the best skins, and many other little things that she knew would be acceptable.

She had just come from depositing a bundle of these little gifts upon the steps of the scout's cabin, and was stealing secretly away to return to her prairie home, when, through the open door of Wild Nell's home, she beheld the thrilling scene, and that Buffalo Bill was in deadly danger.

Instantly she sprang from the beautiful spotted pony she was riding, and gliding up to the cabin, fixed an arrow to the bow and stepped within.

Had she not come as she did, those two men would have met in combat, and one, perhaps both, would have fallen, for it would have proven a battle of giants.

The moment that Wild Nell saw that Star Eye held an arrow covering the heart of Roy Kent, with the strange

contradiction of her nature, she sprang from the side of Buffalo Bill, and placed herself between the Death Shot and his threatened danger.

But though this left no obstacle between Buffalo Bill and himself, Roy Kent was too cunning to bring matters to a crisis by firing, as he knew that, though he killed the scout, he would fall himself at the hands of the Indian girl.

"Why turns the Star Eye her arrow upon me?" he asked, though he did not look toward her, or take his eyes from the scout.

"The Death Shot is a snake in the grass; he will strike at the great hunter, but the Star Eye will kill him if he strikes. The prairies are large; let him go."

The words of Star Eye, delivered in a quiet way, and in good English, admitted of but one interpretation: the Death Shot must go.

"Shall I turn my back and be shot like a wolf by a man?" he said, angrily.

"No, I am not like yourself, an assassin. You are free to go, but beware, when we again meet. Could I kill you now, I would not do so in the presence of this noble woman whose love for you I respect. Take Star Eye's advice and go!"

Buffalo Bill spoke in the almost indifferent manner habitual to him when in danger, and with perfect confidence in his word, Roy Kent lowered his weapon and said, threateningly:

"Yes, I will go; but, Buffalo Bill, beware!"

Without another word, or even a glance at the woman who had shielded him with her form from the threatening arrow of the Star Eye, Roy Kent turned and bounded out of the door.

Quickly Wild Nell glided after him, and disappeared in the darkness without.

"The Star Eye has more than returned the service rendered her many moons ago, and the buffalo killer thanks her," said Buffalo Bill, kindly, taking the hand of the Indian girl, who now trembled visibly.

"The paleface hunter is a mighty chief, and his words are sweet to the heart of the Star Eye; but she must go back to her people," she said, softly.

"Why is the Star Eye here, when her people are far off on the prairie?"

The Indian girl's head dropped at the question, and without a word she turned away and went out of the door.

Buffalo Bill followed, and, as he stood in the light of the doorway there came a flash and he fell his full length.

CHAPTER XI.

AN AVENGER ON THE TRACK.

Following the shot was a woman's scream, and then a rapid clatter of hoofs.

The one who had fired was Roy Kent.

He had mounted his horse, which he had left in the stable, when he came to the cabin, and there Wild Nell joined him. At first he cursed the poor woman bitterly for following him, and preventing his killing the scout when he arrived on the scene, and held him at an advantage; but her reply in a low tone, caused him to

"All right; another time we will meet."

Just then the scout appeared in the doorway, and, like a flash of lightning, Roy Kent threw his rifle forward and pulled the trigger.

The report and fall of Buffalo Bill instantly followed, and from the lips of Wild Nell broke a wild shriek, and, with a harsh laugh, the Death Shot put spurs to his horse and dashed away.

Thinking that he had gone, Wild Nell started at a run for her cabin, and ere she reached it, she beheld the figure of the Indian girl bound in the door, bend over the stricken scout, and then, without a word, spring away from the cabin.

A shrill call followed, and the spotted pony darted around the cabin, and Star Eye was upon his back, away he flew, evidently in pursuit of Roy Kent.

"She is after him and will kill him," cried Wild Nell, in sudden terror, and drawing from her belt—for she was in man's attire—a revolver, she threw it forward, and rapidly sent shot after shot at the flying Indian girl. Star Eye did not even turn in her saddle, but kept right on, flying through the darkness, unhurt, as was her swift pony, by the leaden messengers that whistled over her head.

Although Roy Kent was mounted upon an animal that hardly had an equal, and certainly no superior on the prairies, the spotted pony followed on his trail with a speed that was marvelous, for Star Eye's confidence in the animal she rode alone caused her to trust herself on the prairies so far from the village of her people.

Just keeping the flying form of Roy Kent in sight, as he sped on through the darkness, Star Eye held her breath so as not to lose him for an instant.

That she was following him to avenge Buffalo Bill was evident, and that she dare not let him see her on his trail she well knew, for she felt she was no match for the scout unless she could take him at a disadvantage.

And at a disadvantage she determined to take him, relying upon her Indian cunning and natural woman's wit to get the best of him.

Thus the two flew along over the prairie, the man evidently determined upon some decided course, and holding to it, at the same time confident that he had killed his dangerous enemy, the scout, while the Indian girl on his trail as determinedly held her intention of avenging herself upon the one who, as she also believed, had killed Buffalo Bill.

As the gray of the dawn began to lighten the horizon, Roy Kent drew rein and halted for a short rest, in a spot where there were both water and grass.

His faithful horse was soon lariatd out to feed, and the Death Shot threw himself down to rest for a short time.

From a rise in the prairie a long way off, Star Eye beheld her enemy halt, and she at once determined to get near to him, though it was a difficult task.

Observing that the prairie was irregular she concluded to lariat her pony and then crawl toward the distant spot as best she could.

Carefully selecting the course she would follow, she took from her head the gaudy coronet of feathers, and laying flat down, cautiously crawled along.

It was a difficult task to accomplish; but Star Eye was set upon revenge, and, worming herself along, she slowly drew toward the timber, though she made hardly a hundred yards in an hour's time.

At length she reached a small wash, and by following this three hours after leaving the hill, she lay panting and revengeful, within a dozen paces of the man she had determined to kill.

Nearer and nearer she drew, noiseless as a serpent, and with her eyes blazing, and then she halted and dropped her hand upon the long knife she wore in her belt.

Had she been a moment sooner Roy Kent's life would have ended there and then, for the sharp blade would have been driven into his heart.

But for some reason, perhaps because the presence of danger awakened him, he uttered a startled cry, like one in a nightmare, and sprang to his feet.

Maddened with rage at her failure to take him unawares, utterly fearless of consequences, and determined to match her strength with the strong man before her, Star Eye, rushed upon him with a cry of fury, her knife in hand.

Roy Kent saw his danger and had just time to catch the uplifted hand in his own iron grasp, and raising the slender form in his powerful arms, he hurled it to earth with a force that rendered the poor girl unconscious.

Then drawing his pistol from his belt, he seemed as if about to fire upon her and forever end her life; but the manhood in him appealed to him, and, with a flush of

shame upon his dark face, he put the weapon back and turned away.

Five minutes after he was mounted upon his horse and again dashing over the prairie at a rapid rate, leaving poor Star Eye, still insensible, lying on the ground beneath the shelter of the cottonwood trees.

Shortly after Roy Kent disappeared in the distance, Star Eye slowly recovered consciousness, and soon the dark eyes opened and looked around her searchingly, and an expression of pain passed over the face as she moved.

But stifling a cry of suffering, she arose to her feet and sought the bank of the little stream that flowed near, and began to bathe her bruises.

Feeling refreshed and better after a bath and rest, she returned slowly to where she had left her pony, and was soon upon the trail of Roy Kent.

Though she seemed to suffer intensely, she was not one to give up her purpose, and though she could not ride rapidly, she yet kept persistently on, resting when absolutely compelled to, and with the settled look upon every feature to get revenge.

It was a long and a weary trail she followed, and when at last, she could go no further, she sank down to rest in some timber upon the banks of a small stream, and there, a few hours after, two white hunters found her lying upon the soft grass and raving in delirium.

"It is the Star Eye o' the Pawnees; old Red Heart's darter," said one of the hunters, an old weather-beaten frontiersman who had been an Indian-fighter and trapper for forty years, and who was known on the border as Beaver Ben.

"You're right, Ben; and she's in a bad way; jist listen how she lets slip the chin music; but we must take care of her, for her people are friendly to the whites; and, besides, it wouldn't be right to let her die here," answered the companion of Beaver Ben, who was a much younger man than the other, and one of the best plainsmen in the country.

His name was Jack Nelson, but the redskins called him Cha-sha-sha-na-po-ge-o, which means, "Fill the pipe with red willow."

A perfect type of a borderman, well-formed, good-looking, as strong as a lion and as fearless, Jack Nelson roamed the plains from a real love of the dangers he encountered, and was more at home in an Indian camp than in the cabins of the settlers.

Springing from their horses, the two men at once made arrangements to camp, and, raising the form of the Indian girl, they placed their blankets down for a bed, and did all they could for her.

"What's thet she's sayin', Jack?" asked Beaver Ben, as Star Eye continued to chatter.

"She's talking about Buffalo Bill, or I am a p hear her now how she runs on; and about Roy too, for she calls him the Death Shot; what can it be Ben?"

"Dunno. I wonder ef thet Death Shot hed anyter do with this gal's ailin'; you know, when we him at the station he said as how he'd jist come t this trail."

"Yes, Ben; and I don't like him for a cent; di hear that?"

Both were silent and listened attentively to the rs of the young girl, who said in a disconnected way it own language, which both the hunters understood n

"The Death Shot must die, the Star Eye and Pawnees must let her knife drink his blood. They buffalo-killer of the palefaces cries from the ve hunting grounds of his people for the Star Eye te the Death Shot. She will obey the spirit of the bu. killer, but the Death Shot's trail is long, and sid weary and in pain from the blow he gave her."

She ceased speaking, and Jack Nelson quickly sa

"I tell you, Ben, there's been some dirty work pla I'm thinking, and taking all things together, it w bad for that Kent."

"Yas, he was durned anxious like to git to ther t as he said he was goin' East for a spell; and theash speaks as though Buffalo Bill was dead, and thet feller had done the business fer him."

"It certainly looks bad, and I'll tell you what do."

"I are a-hearin' o' yer."

"Well, I will strike for the Pawnee village of wo Heart, and tell him about his darter, while you d here to nurse her until her people come; then I will to McPherson and look up Buffalo Bill and see wh been to pay."

"I'm willin', Jack, and I'll do the best I kin fer poor leetle gal; only git out quick, 'kase I hain't a d tor man, yer know," was the reply of old Beaver Ben.

"I'll hurry along, and when Red Heart comes, I strike for McPherson, for I'll wait there for you."

So saying, Jack Nelson mounted his wiry little po and set off at a canter across the prairie.

CHAPTER XII.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

Buffalo Bill staggered to his feet from the cabin flo the blood trickling from a slight scalp wound in m head, where the bullet had glanced.

Momentarily stunned by the shock, it was an insta before the scout could collect his scattered senses, a when he glanced around he saw Wild Nell entering the cabin door.

knowing but that Roy Kent was following her, he drew a revolver, and stood on the defensive; stepping within, Wild Nell closed the door behind her. She said, anxiously: "How much hurt?"

"The bullet merely cut the scalp, but the blow killed me; the shot was fired by Kent?"

"Yes, when you came in the light of the door. I could not prevent it."

"That is just as well, or it gives me another account to give him when we meet."

"Do not kill him; spare him for my sake," said the girl most plaintively.

"Why should I? Has he not attempted my life, and have I harmed him?"

"True; but though I hate him, I do not wish to see him die."

"Wild Nell, you are a strange creature. Why did you spare him as he rode away, for I think I heard pistol shots?"

"I did, and I fired them, but not at Roy Kent."

"At whom, then?"

"The Indian girl."

"And have you injured her?" and Buffalo Bill's face flashed, angrily.

"No, for I did not check her speed. She went in the light of Roy Kent, and I fired at her, though, had I waited an instant, I might have known her pony could keep pace with the horse he rides."

Buffalo Bill was silent a moment, and then said:

"It would be useless to follow them now, for I could not find their trail; but at daylight I shall do so."

Buffalo Bill strode toward the door, and, without a word, Wild Nell let him go out into the darkness.

When, as the door closed behind him, she threw herself upon the bed and burst into tears.

Swiftly back to his cabin walked the scout, and finding there, found Lord Elstone pacing the floor in thought and awaiting him.

"I heard firing, Cody; do you know anything about it?"

"Yes, my lord," and Buffalo Bill made known all that had taken place.

When he spoke of Star Eye, the Englishman said:

"It must have been the same girl that I saw. I went out to put up your horse, and, as I came back, I saw an Indian girl glide away from the door, and yonder bundle upon the step."

Buffalo Bill stepped forward and unrolled a bundle of dressed buckskin, which was wrapped around a pair of leggings, a hunting shirt and leggings and an ingenious-made belt.

"This solves the mystery; now I know from whence

come my presents of this kind," said the scout, thoughtfully, as he laid the things aside, and added, in a low tone:

"I hope harm will not befall little Star Eye for following Kent, yet I fear for her, as he would not hesitate to kill her."

Unable to sleep the scout paced the floor, after dressing the slight wound on his head, and when daylight approached both himself and Lord Elstone ate a hasty breakfast, and mounting their horses set forth on the trail of Roy Kent and the Star Eye.

The tracks were easily found, and then the two rode forward at a canter, and continued on for half a mile when Buffalo Bill suddenly drew rein.

"Early as it is, there is some one on the trail ahead of us," he said, as he gazed searchingly upon the ground.

"And who can it be?" asked Lord Elstone.

"That remarkable girl, Wild Nell; I know the tracks of her horse well, and she is riding rapidly. Come, we must push on, for Star Eye is in double danger, as I believe Wild Nell would kill her to protect that wretch from harm."

"What an enigma she is—one moment wishing to kill him, and the next risking her life to save him."

"Yes, and what he is to her I cannot tell," and the two men pressed on more rapidly.

But Kent and his pursuer had had fully five hours' start of them, and had ridden on a run, so were a long way ahead; yet, pressing steadily on, the trailers came to the spot where the Indian maiden had lariatied her pony, while she crept toward the timber where the Death Shot had halted to rest.

The prairie craft of Buffalo Bill at once gave him an insight into the truth of the matter, and explaining it to Lord Elstone, they rode hastily toward the motte.

"The girl came back after her pony, for there is his track," said the scout, and, soon after, the two men stood on the spot which had so nearly proven fatal to Roy Kent.

There, too, the prairie knowledge of Buffalo Bill gave an idea of what had occurred, and they once more started on the trail, halting only when night came on.

A long night's rest and the scout and the Englishman discovered far in the distance an Indian camp.

Approaching nearer, Buffalo Bill pronounced the Indians to be the band of Red Heart, and they urged their horses forward at an increased pace.

But before they reached the village, they discovered signs of considerable excitement, and in the midst of the redskins the scout recognized the paleface who with the Indians came forward to meet them.

It was Jack Nelson, who had arrived but a few mo-

ments before at the Indian camp and called out as he drew near to the newcomers:

"Bill, old pard, I'm glad to see you right side up with care, for I feared you had passed in your chips."

"No, Jack, I am still on hand; but what is the trouble?" answered the scout.

"Well, Old Beaver Ben and myself found the prettiest Indian girl in these parts lying sick and hurt some distance from here, and——"

"It was Star Eye, the daughter of Red Heart," interrupted the scout.

"True as preaching, and she's in a bad way, for she's got fever, and chins about you being dead and that the Death Shot, whom you know is that Roy Kent, shall die by her hand."

"Poor girl; and where is she?"

"I left her at the Pawnee timber motte—you know where that is—and Beaver Ben is looking after her, while I came on to tell old Red Heart, after which I was going to the Post to look you up."

"I thank you, Jack; but did you see Kent?"

"Yes; he's gone East."

"What!"

"He took train at the nearest railroad station for a trip East, for me and Ben seen him."

Buffalo Bill and Lord Elstone exchanged looks, and the former said:

"Jack, you told the Red Heart about his daughter?"

"Yes, Bill, and the chief and boss medicine man lit out at once for the Pawnee motte, and the village will follow."

"Well, there is nothing to be done for the girl, as the Pawnee medicine-man will look after her, so I will ask you to guide Lord Elstone to the Post."

"And, you, Cody?" asked the Englishman.

"I will follow on the trail of Kent, if he leads me to the Atlantic," said the scout, firmly.

"You are convinced, then, that he is the one who murdered my brother?" asked Lord Elstone, in a low tone.

"There is certainly a network of suspicion around him, sir, and I happen to know that his trip East is one of deviltry, and I will circumvent him, and yet bring him to justice."

"I have perfect faith in you, Cody, and hence remain passive, believing that you will yet unearth the mystery that hangs over my brother's death, and then quick punishment upon the murderer shall follow; but, going East, you will need funds, so permit me to——"

"Thanks, my lord, I am amply provided with money, and yet there is one favor I would ask you?"

"Name it, and it is granted beforehand, if in my power."

Buffalo Bill glanced at Jack Nelson and, leaning forward, whispered something to Lord Elstone, who answered, quickly:

"A good idea; do just as you please, and, if you need me, telegraph to the nearest station, and I will come on."

Buffalo Bill now asked Jack Nelson to go with Lord Elstone back to the Post, and to act as hunter and guide for the nobleman until his return from the East, and under no circumstances to speak of where he had gone.

A few words more and they separated, the Indian vil-

lage having moved away already in the direction of the Pawnee motte, where poor Star Eye lay ill.

Under the guidance of Jack Nelson, Lord Elstone immediately turned back toward the Post, while Buffalo Bill continued on alone, heading due east, and in due time to strike the railroad station at the point where he had taken the train.

Shortly after nightfall, he halted at the foot of a thickly wooded hill to camp; but hardly had he dismounted from the saddle from his horse when he saw a bright light upon the hillside far above him.

For an instant only did it catch his eye, and then it was darkness again. Convinced that some danger was lurking near, he concealed his horse in a ravine and cautiously began ascending the hill in the direction where he had seen the light.

A climb of half a mile and he came to a halt. He distinctly heard a loud, hoarse laugh not a hundred feet from him.

With renewed caution, he advanced, and soon reached a cabin in the hillside, and from within were heard several voices.

They were white men, and anticipating no danger, he advanced boldly and knocked upon the door.

Instantly a rapid moving of feet was heard, and then a voice asked:

"Who is there?"

"A friend who seeks shelter for the night," answered the scout.

"Come in!" replied the same voice that had spoken.

He entered, and as he glanced around him, to his surprise he discovered a dozen rough-looking men, each and each one held a revolver covering his heart.

Too late to retreat, he knew that he had invaded the domain of prairie renegades, and that he was at the mercy of men who held no mercy in their hearts.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN AN OUTLAW'S DEN.

Recognizing that he was in a trap, Buffalo Bill showed not the slightest sign of fear, but said, with a smile:

"This is a strange way to receive a friend, pardners."

The leader answered:

"We don't know who is friends, but tell me, many is with you?"

"My horse and myself are all; I was on my way to the settlements, started to camp at the foot of the hill, seeing your light, came on here," said the scout, quietly.

"That was when you opened that door, Jim Haskins. I tell yer, light kin be seen a long way off, and we be keeful," said the leader.

"Why should white men be afraid of their kind?"

"Have you ever heerd o' the Toll Takers, pardner?"

"Yes; they are a gang of desperadoes and thieves that are the curse of this border, raiding on the dark, stealing and murdering and never fighting unless cornered," was the fearless reply of Buffalo Bill.

"You has us down fine."

"You! you are certainly joking," said the scout, affected surprise.

guesses not; we is them of whom you has just so good."

"By, there's a reward of five hundred dollars on the head of each one of you."

"That as Gospel, pard, an' thar is thirteen o' us here, can figger up how much we'd bring ef yer was to be all in, an' p'raps you'd better try."

"I'm determined not to show that he feared them, Buffalo Bill, quickly."

"I had a few good men with me, I'd try it; but is your pleasure with me?"

"A-al, how wu'd yer like to jine ther band? Looks like yer was grit in yer?"

"Thank you; I'm no thief."

"You has a sweet way o' putting it; but now tell us what you is?"

"That is none of your business."

"Yingo! but you has got grit; we'll see ef it holds up."

"I know who he is, and I has had cause to."

A speaker was standing in the background, but now stepped forward, and Buffalo Bill recognized him as a man who had once been a soldier, and had deserted after being a sergeant, but whom he had captured and taken to the fort, where he was sentenced to be shot, yet escaped death by making his escape a few hours before he was appointed for his execution.

"Though he knew that the deserter had threatened to kill him for capturing him, Buffalo Bill was determined to have the thing out, and said:

"Hello! Dick Lightfoot, we meet again!"

"Yes, an' I guess it'll be our last meeting, Buffalo Bill!"

The name was upon every lip in chorus, as the soldier said it, for though no one else present seemed to know the famous scout by sight, one and all knew him well by reputation, and feared him more than any man on the frontier, as he had always proven himself the bitter foe of outlaws and horse thieves.

"Pard, that settles it; you hain't got long to tarry on 'arth, and you'd better sling out a leetle Gospel," said the leader, while every revolver in the band again covered the broad breast of the scout.

With a fearless smile upon his handsome face, Buffalo Bill stood, with folded arms, indifferently looking into the threatening muzzles.

"Pard, you is game an' no mistake; but what is we to do with yer?"

"You just intimatetd that you intended to kill me."

"I just inti—what?"

"Intimated."

"Yes, I s'pose I did, but I pass big words; they gives ther toothache, so sling out small ones; now, what is we ter do with yer?"

"If you ask me the question, I answer, let me go."

"But I don't ax yer ther question; I only hates to see an kilt as has got your grit, an' says to my pards, that is we ter do with yer?"

"You remember our orders from the chief?" suggested the deserter.

"Yes, ther chief said as how we was ter kill Buff'ler the moment we sot eyes 'pon him; now, pard,

won't yer jist make some leetle trouble, so as we can drop on yer?"

"As Dick Lightfoot seems to want me out of the way, I'll fight it out with him, and if I kill him, then let me go."

Several voices at once cried out in favor of this proposition, but the deserter did not seem to relish the anticipated meeting, and said, quickly:

"Yes, and then he'll go and bring the soldiers down upon the balance of you."

"Them is words of wisdom, pard, and as the chief told us to kill him, it's got to be done," and the leader turned to Buffalo Bill.

"Has you any favorite mode o' dying, pard?"

"Never having tried it, I cannot say that I have."

"Then we'll make it as pleasant for you as we can; now, pard, jist hand me yer shootin' irons."

As the man advanced toward Buffalo Bill, he failed to notice the lightning glance the prisoner sent around him, and the manner in which he seemed to gather himself, like a tiger preparing to spring.

That the men would kill him, he knew, and that his chances for escape were painfully few, he also well understood.

But certain death would quickly follow if he surrendered his weapons, and there was a chance in his favor if he resisted.

With one lightning glance, he took in the odds for and against him, and then said:

"Pards, I guess you won't be so cruel as to kill an unarmed man, so here are my pistols, if you want them."

He unbuckled his belt as he spoke, and held it forth, while the leader and the deserter stepped briskly forward to take them.

But just as they stretched forth their hands to grasp the belt, it fell to the ground, and two revolvers were suddenly thrust forward and fired in half a second's time.

The reports of the pistols, yells, and a crashing sound came almost together, and then the Toll Takers were aware that two of their comrades lay dead on the floor, that the door had been broken open by one powerful kick, and that Buffalo Bill had fled.

With wild cries, they started in pursuit, not five seconds behind him, but from the light into the darkness momentarily blinded their eyes, and not knowing which way he had gone, they fired at random as they ran.

In the meantime Buffalo Bill fled with the speed of a deer down the steep hillside.

After several rather severe falls, in the darkness being unable to see where he placed his feet, he reached the ravine where his horse was concealed, and quickly saddled and bridled him; but ere he could mount there came a flash and report, and a bullet whistled over his head, showing that his pursuers had followed him rapidly and had discovered him.

But Buffalo Bill was already in his saddle, and a word to his horse sent the noble animal away like an arrow from a bow, followed by a rattling volley of pistol shots.

"A close shave for life, that; but it's war now between me and those Toll Takers," muttered the scout, as he urged his horse on rapidly across the rolling

prairies on his way to the stage station, where he could catch a coach to the nearest railroad to take him East.

For he knew just where Roy Kent had gone and why, as he had not forgotten what Buck, the dying miner, had told him.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DASTARD DEED.

The Pawnee motte, the scene of the breakdown of the Star Eye, when following with revengeful determination upon the trail of the Death Shot, was a favorite camping ground of the people of Red Heart, and when the old chief arrived and found his daughter very ill, though tenderly nursed by Beaver Ben, he determined to remain for some time in the vicinity of the grove of timber.

Having filled his duty as nurse until the arrival of Red Heart, Beaver Ben at once departed for McPherson, and Star Eye was placed in the skillful hands of the medicine-man of the tribe, who rapidly brought her back to health once more, though she refused to have anything to say about the cause of her illness, and only by her words of delirium could the redskins who cared for her discover a reason for her strange and dangerous sickness, which had so nearly proven fatal to her.

One day, weeks after the day that Jack Nelson and Beaver Ben had found her in the motte, Star Eye was seated in front of her *tepee*, engaged in beading a pair of buckskin moccasins.

Looking up from her work, afar off upon the prairie she saw a horseman coming toward the village, and before long her keen eye told her that it was a paleface and not one of the warriors of her tribe.

Nearer and nearer he came, and the bronzed skin of the maiden deepened as she recognized the only man of all others for her.

It was Buffalo Bill, mounted upon a dark bay horse, and with Brigham trotting behind and serving as a pack animal.

Riding straight up to the *tepee*, the scout dismounted and said, pleasantly:

"I am glad to see the Star Eye is again well; it was kind of her to remember me, and I have brought for her and her father some presents."

"The Star Eye is glad to see the great white chief, Pa-e-has-ka, but she will remember him without presents," answered the girl, quietly.

"No; she must accept these gifts," and taking from the pack, which Brigham had borne, a number of trinkets, of beads and little things greatly prized by Indian maidens, the scout poured them in her lap, just as Red Heart advanced.

"The white chief is welcome," he said, with calm dignity, while his eyes glittered as he glanced at the presents.

"Pa-e-has-ka knows that he has Red Heart for a friend, and he has come to see him; he wishes the great Pawnee chief to serve him, and he has brought him a many-shooting rifle, pistols and a knife that will make his enemies fly before him as leaves before the north wind."

As Buffalo Bill spoke, he took from the pack a pair of ivory-handled revolvers and a silver-mounted bowie-knife.

These, with ammunition and other things Indian warriors, he handed to the chief, who delighted with them, calling the scout his brother.

"Now, how can Red Heart serve the white chief," he asked.

"Let the Red Heart and his people go to the lands on the Kiawa Creek, and camp there; you may hear from Pa-he-has-ka; but let my brother note if he or his braves have seen the buffalo-killer."

"The ears of the Red Heart are open; he will leave when the buffalo-killer desires; he will leave when comes next."

Accepting the hospitality of the Indians for a few hours, and leaving his horse, Brigham, with Red Heart, Buffalo Bill set out at nightfall for McPherson, where he arrived in safety, and awaiting until dark, he reached his cabin without being seen, as he was far apart from the others and near the river.

There was, however, a light within and the door was knocked.

At his knock Lord Elstone opened the door and greeted him with delight.

"I really began to fear harm had befallen you,"

"On the contrary, my lord, I met with good fortune, and I played the nobleman fine; but I will tell you about it, and give you my plans for the future. Pa-e-has-ka is again on the border, and is bent on a game of deviltry than ever."

In a few words Buffalo Bill made known the result of his visit to St. Louis, of some fine detective work done there to, in the end, destroy Roy Kent.

As the scout and nobleman arose to retire for the night, there suddenly broke in upon the ears of Lord Elstone an ominous threat:

"Buffalo Bill, you are doomed!"

In an instant the two men threw themselves on the defensive, while a harsh laugh resounded within the cabin, the heavy blows of an ax fell upon the single window of the cabin.

"Quick, Lord Elstone, guard that window, and look out for the door," cried the scout, and blowing out the candle, the two men stood, their weapons ready for use.

But the blows from without ceased, and the two men heard a dragging sound, a scraping and a bright light burst up on the other side.

"By heavens! they have set fire to the cabin! we must dash out and fight them!" cried Lord Elstone.

"Yes, and they have nailed up the door and windows so that we cannot get out! It is Roy Kent's work; he intends to roast us alive, if he can."

Then the two men looked calmly in each other's faces, while, like mad demons, a gang of wild beings rushed around the cabin, throwing more wood against the wooden walls.

Rapidly, and like tinder, the cabin caught on fire, and volumes of flame rolled upward, illuminating the interior and wood around; but no cry for mercy came from the two men within, only a shot through a crack in the logs, and down went one of the howling devils.

Then another followed, as they rushed to cover, and a second fell, and was dragged away, while the warning from the survivors proved that, though

as Indians, and hideously painted, they were white men in disguise.

Fiercer and fiercer the fire burned, until, confident that no one within could be alive, the wild band that had made the daring raid upon the scout's cabin dashed away at the full speed of their horses, just as the alarmed settlers were seen rushing toward the scene, and behind them came a squadron of cavalry from the fort.

CHAPTER XV.

WILD NELL'S VISITORS.

Wild Nell sat alone in her home, her brow clouded, as though she was in no agreeable mood.

Things had not gone to suit her of late; she had risked considerable on cards and lost, and the English nobleman whom she had taken a liking to, after her first meeting with him, was reported burned up in the cabin of Buffalo Bill; then she had not heard from Roy Kent of late, and the scout was away, no one knew where; so Wild Nell was out of sorts.

Presently a shadow fell upon her, and looking out, she saw a tall man before her, with long hair and beard, and dressed in an English hunting suit:

"Pardon me, but do I address the fair lady known as Wild Nell?" he said, politely, stepping across the threshold.

Wild Nell looked searchingly into the face of the man before her, and then said, quietly:

"Come in! Others your disguise may deceive, but me, it cannot; I know your devilish eyes too well, Roy Kent."

"Ah! then you do recognize me, fair Nellie?" and closing the door and bolting it, the man threw himself into a chair.

"This accursed hair and beard are as hot as though my head was in an oven," and the man took them off, the act revealing his handsome, yet reckless and sinister face.

"Well, where have you been, may I ask?" and the woman looked at him in a way he did not seem exactly at ease under.

"To St. Louis."

"What deviltry have you been in there?"

"Getting rich and falling in love."

The woman started, but said, quietly:

"Both of which you doubtless accomplished, as you are not particular as to the means you employ in gaining your ends."

"I would have been more successful had it not been for that accursed nobleman."

"How has he been in your way?"

"He followed me East and thwarted my plans, for he made known to my uncle that his old mine was a bonanza, and, in fact, he nearly got my neck in the noose."

"Nonsense, the Englishman has not been away; he spends his days in hunting, and——"

"And will hunt no more, except in the happy hunting grounds," laughed the man, hoarsely.

"So it is said; he was burned up in the scout's cabin, and I believe you were at the bottom of that fiendish deed."

"I was; it was well done, I think."

"You usually perform your acts of devilry to perfection; but why did you say this English nobleman was in St. Louis, when I know he has been here?"

"I tell you the truth, Nell, and——"

"I tell you that you lie; Buffalo Bill has been absent, and is still away, but Lord Elstone——"

"Bah! what a fool I have been; now I see that I was mistaken in the man, and took the scout, disguised as he was, for Lord Elstone, but then I believed that my bullet had put an end to Cody until one of my men told me he was still alive. Well, I am avenged now, for I roasted the scout and the Englishman together."

In an instant Wild Nell was upon her feet, her eyes blazing:

"Do you mean to say that Buffalo Bill was in that cabin?"

"Yes; we trailed him from the Medicine Creek here, and, peeping through the cracks in the cabin, I saw him within, and so we nailed up the window and door, and roasted those two men like a couple of prairie chickens."

"Roy Kent, I hate you!"

There was something intensely bitter in the way in which the woman spoke that made the man feel uncomfortable; but with an indifferent laugh, he retorted:

"So you have often told me before, my dear."

"A drop of water will wear away a stone, and you may yet go too far. I hate you, and I've a mind to kill you," and the woman dropped her hand menacingly upon her revolver.

"Don't do it, Nell; you've a tender heart, and my death at your hands would keep you awake nights. No, instead of shooting me, aid me."

"In devilry?"

"Of course; why should I be engaged in anything else?"

"What is your next card?" she asked.

"I'll tell you; the old mine panned out rich, as I told you, and I wished to get possession of it by fair means and failed; then I tried foul, and, through Buffalo Bill, in his disguise, I failed again."

"Now my uncle comes out West to see about this mine, and with him is an old Jew who is to advance the money to work the mine, and who, by the way, holds my uncle's notes for all he is worth."

"Along with my uncle comes my beautiful cousin, the only woman I ever loved, Nell."

The woman's eyes were quickly lowered to hide the burning hate that shone in them at his words; but he went on:

"She has a soft place in her heart for me, Nell, and with the old gentleman away, I can win her for my wife."

Again the woman started, and her face became livid; but she made no reply, and Roy Kent, wholly reckless, continued:

"With her my wife I control her fortune, left by her mother, and the mine at her father's death will be hers, and out here men often die suddenly. Don't they, Nell?"

"Yes, they do," was the rejoinder.

"Well, my uncle's moneyed man, the Jew, and his legal adviser, a gigantic old fraud by the name of Shyster, with my lovely cousin and a scamp to whom

she is engaged, and who is a tool in the hands of old Moses, will comprise the party, and I desire you to aid me in a little plan I have to make a fortune by a bold strike."

"And then?"

"Why, after I marry my cousin, thereby getting her money when she dies, and she cannot live long, as I leave her to your tender mercy, then I will go with you to Europe and we will revel in wealth."

"It is a fiendish plan, and I will not aid you," said the woman, calmly.

"But if I say that you must?"

"I will still refuse."

"And you dare to disobey me, woman?"

"I do; I have sinned for you and I am wretched; I am a wild she-devil, as men call me, yet I will never aid you again, Roy Kent, in one act of wrong. If I now killed you, I would save much misery in the world, and you certainly deserve death for your crimes."

"Nell I command you to take your hand from that pistol!"

He spoke sternly, and threw all the magnetism he possessed into his eyes as he turned them upon the woman.

He dared not attempt to draw his own revolver, for he knew that it would but hasten his end, as Wild Nell was a dead center shot.

Once more he commanded her to place the dangerous toy she held back in her belt, and with a bitter laugh she refused.

Then he knew that he had lost his remarkable power over her.

With a smothered curse, he tried another plan.

Instantly the angry light went out of his eyes, and the harshness from his voice, while he said in tones that caused her to tremble:

"Nell, I bare my heart to your aim. Fire! I will not resist, for I have wronged, bitterly wronged you, and I deserve death at your hands.

"Fire, Nell, and with my dying breath I will forgive you."

The weapon was lowered, and in pleading tones, she cried:

"Oh, Roy! did you mean that you would marry your cousin and cast me off?"

"Why, Nell, you are a silly little fool to think I could desert you," answered the man, his heart bounding with joy at the triumph he now knew he had won.

Into a corner of the room Wild Nell passionately threw the revolver and bounding forward, was caught in his arms.

Instantly his face changed, his eyes glinted like a snake's and his strong arms encircled her, while he drew from her belt her own keen knife.

"Oh, Roy! what would you do?" she cried, now thoroughly alarmed at the wild look in his face.

"I will place you where you will never harm me, my beauty. I have long been tired of you, and you have lately shown a disposition to kill me."

Holding her firmly, and so that she was unable to move, he raised the knife above her heart, while she fearlessly met his gaze, and said, without the quiver of a nerve:

"Coward! murderer! strike! I was a fool, and deserve death at your hands."

"And you shall have it; but I wish first to make you tremble, curse you!" he hissed, his face working with hatred.

"Hold up a leetle, pard! 'Thet's a girl you has thar."

From the woman's lips broke a cry of joy; from the man came a muttered curse, as, looking in through the open window, he beheld an unkempt head of hair, and dark, rough face pressed against the stock of a rifle, the muzzle of which pointed into the room.

"Don't shoot! I mean her no harm."

"You've a durn funny way o' amusin' ther gal, the an' I guesses as how you'd better let up on the funny business and light out, kase this weppin o' mine wants to explode awful bad. Git, pard, and don't come round here again."

The speaker never took his face from the stock of the rifle as he spoke, and Roy Kent quickly threw Wild Nell from him, seized his false wig and beard and bounded from the room, his face demoniacal in its expression.

As the clatter of hoofs was heard, showing that he had ridden away at full speed, the door of the cabin was darkened, and there entered the man who had a moment before saved the life of Wild Nell.

He looked to be a miner from the Colorado digging and was dressed rudely in red woolen shirt, corduroy pants, stuck in rawhide boots, and wore a greasy old sombrero on his head.

His hair was unkempt, and so was a full beard, and his complexion was rough. At his back was slung a rifle, and in his belt he wore a couple of revolvers and a bowie knife.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNMASKED.

"I guess, sis, as how that man hain't a most particular friend o' yours," was the remark of the stranger after Wild Nell had thanked him most fervently for saving her life.

"He should be all in all to me, sir, but he hates me as bitterly as I now hate him."

"He are a bad man to go back on a woman, and I sarve him right ef I hed jist sent a bullet through his head; but, I don't like to spile a pleasant joy for a hangman, and I let up on him. I guesses I'll meet him again, sometime, and then he'll want to spile my picture by my attentions to him to-day. What are his name and sis?"

"The men on the border call him Roy Kent, and the Indians have another name for him—the Death Shot."

"I heerd o' him, and maybe you heerd o' me, as the pards call me Cast Iron Bill, and I am the boss o' the mines, fer I'm a whole team, an' horse ter let, an' whopper-jawed bulldog under the wagin, leetle gal, don't I look terreeble."

"No, you look like a man with a big heart, but if I cenered, I think you would be a very dangerous enemy. Now let me get you some supper, for it's growing late."

"I'm yer huckleberry on ther eat, leetle gal, though I don't seem egzactly right in me to destroy all your plans, fer I'm a reg'ler commissary tent fer storing away rashins; but I'll not explain, as you'll see w

"I kin do when yer trots out ther wital's; but whars yer folks, for yer don't look like a widdy?"

"I am all alone; there is not a soul in the world that cares for me," replied Wild Nell, sadly.

"Durned if I wouldn't say that thar remark were er—a falsification o' ther solid truth, ef yer were a man, fer yer looks as though everybody in ther world might like yer."

"Still I tell you the truth; I am all alone, yet I am able to take care of myself."

"You looks thet way, too, when one don't get you on ther sly, as thet feller did a while ago; but, tell me, does yer know a young man whom the redskins call the buffalo-killer!" and the miner paused in his eating, for Wild Nell had already placed eatables before him, and looked her straight in the face.

"I did know Buffalo Bill, and a braver, better man never lived."

"You talk as though he'd passed in his chips, leetle gal?"

"He was burned to death in his cabin two nights ago—both he and another splendid man."

"You don't tell me so! But I don't believe it, for he hain't ther man to go under yit; he's cut out fer a long life."

"Yet I tell you the truth; he returned to his cabin, which was surrounded and set on fire by—by—a band of Indians, it was said, and the door and window being nailed up he was unable to make his escape and perished. Oh, what a terrible death for brave men to die!"

"You're right thar, leetle gal; but I don't believe it, and I want yer to prove it."

"Alas! how can I, and how glad I would be if it were not so."

"Well, trot out the corpse ef yer wants me ter b'lieve it, fer I hain't one who is givin' it up thet the scout is dead."

"You knew him, then?"

"Yas, I knows him well, but ef he's cashed in his chips, I'm gwine to cause several funerals, for I'm Beelzebub himself on revenge, pious as I look."

"And I, too, intend to avenge him."

The words fairly burst from the lips of Wild Nell, and she turned her flashing eyes upon the strange guest.

"Then we'll hitch horses on thet, leetle gal; now, who is we ter kill fust?"

"I know his murderer, and I have a bitter grudge against him."

"P'int him out, and he'll chaw the cud o' discord to n'st."

For a moment Wild Nell was silent, and seemed buried in a deep thought, while the miner paused in his eating and attentively regarded her.

At length she seemed to have made up her mind to some course, and said:

"You are a brave man, and I believe have a noble soul, so I will join forces with you and seek revenge against the slayer of Buffalo Bill, and that other, who was also a true man and perished with him."

"Whether the scout has any relatives to mourn his loss I know not; but the other was an English nobleman, who came to this country to find out about the death of his brother, a brother who was cruelly murdered here."

"In England he left a lordly home and friends, and one who was more than a friend to him, for he was to marry her upon his return, so he told me; if he found that his brother was really dead, for he also loved the lady with all his heart, and came here to know the real truth of the body that lay in the grave in the timber."

"Now he is dead, and she must mourn for him as she did for his brother, and I feel revengeful toward the one who destroyed their happiness, for I, too, have had the joy of my life crushed, and I, too, know what it is to suffer."

"Once, in the long ago, I wept when I suffered. Now I curse, ay, and I hate! Did you ever hate?"

She asked the question almost savagely.

"Well, as I've got nobody ter love, I has ter hate," was the very quiet reply.

"Well, I hate, and, thus hating, I will hunt down those who have harmed me. Will you aid me, if I will tell you who it is we are to strike?"

"Just try me, leetle gal, and ef I don't, I'll jine ther Sunday school, and drink water fer the remainder o' my nat'ral existence. I'm on ther shoot, I is, an' I've got it bad."

"Then here's my hand on it, and we'll not only revenge the scout and his friend, but wipe out from this border a band of desperadoes that are a curse to it."

"And them fellers is——"

"Toll Takers of the prairie."

The miner sprung to his feet, and, as he grasped the woman's hand in a grip that made her wince with pain, he cried:

"That is what brought me here, gal, fer I am on the trail of them Toll Takers, wuss nor a wolf, and the chief o' the band were ther man I druv from this here cabing."

"Do you know this to be so?" asked Wild Nell, excitedly.

"I does; it are true as Gospil."

"Then to-night we start on the trail of Roy Kent and his outlaws."

"Do you mean it, Wild Nell?"

The voice had suddenly changed, the border dialect was gone and looking closely now at her visitor, the woman saw him suddenly unmask, and Buffalo Bill stood revealed.

There was a special reason for his allowing Roy Kent to leave the cabin unharmed. He was now on the track of the whole band of Toll Takers, and he intended that Roy Kent should be the means of betraying them.

Without waiting for Wild Nell to speak, the scout said:

"We escaped from the burning cabin through a tunnel way leading to the river, and which was a ravine I covered over long ago."

"Lord Elstone will go with us, also Jack Nelson, Beaver Ben, Star Eye and a score of her braves, so the days of Roy Kent and his band are numbered."

"And I am your ally, heart and soul," was the determined reply of Wild Nell.

CHAPTER XVII.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

Buffalo Bill and his allies, white and red, among them Wild Nell and Star Eye, have just surprised the Toll Takers in the camp in a wild canyon, from which there is no escape.

The attacking party press them hotly into the open canyon.

There the outlaws rally for a desperate stand; but Buffalo Bill, followed by Lord Elstone and Wild Nell, drive spurs into their horses and bound into their very midst, and the line is broken.

With triumphant yells, Star Eye and her warriors now press them hard, and Beaver Ben having taken them in the flank, the outlaws cry for mercy.

"Hold! do not kill those men who beg for their lives!" shouts Buffalo Bill.

"I do not beg for my life."

It was Roy Kent who speaks, and he stands at bay, his back against a cabin, and his knife in hand, for he has fired his last shot.

"Roy Kent, I command you to surrender," and Buffalo Bill advances toward him.

"Never!"

"I can shoot you as you stand, if I so desire."

"True, but I know you too well for that, Buffalo Bill; you are no murderer, I'll say that, much as I hate you."

"I hain't governed by no sich high-toned feelin' pard, and I will, therefore, call yer fer yer chips."

It is Beaver Ben who speaks, and he is raising his rifle while speaking.

"No, Ben; I'll attend to this matter," and then turning to Roy Kent, Buffalo Bill continues:

"You are at bay, and a desperate man, so I am unwilling to shoot you, and offer you terms."

"Buffalo Bill, will you grant me one favor?"

"What is it?"

"That you meet me knife to knife in deadly combat; if I kill you, I am to have permission to leave here free; if you kill me, then you have accomplished your aim."

"I accept your terms, Roy Kent, and Jack Nelson will see that you go unmolested from here if I fall by your hands."

Even the stolid Indians look up in surprise, when Buffalo Bill, who holds Roy Kent wholly in his power, is going to risk his life in personal combat with him; a man of desperate courage and wondrous skill with the knife.

But Buffalo Bill has given his word, and Roy Kent smiles grimly in anticipation of his deadly revenge over the man he hates so much.

"Oh, Bill! brave and powerful as you are, do not face that man, for I know his marvelous strength and skill."

It is Wild Nell who speaks, and she confronts the scout, her face pale, her look most anxious.

"Nell, I have tracked that man for one purpose; to kill him, or be killed in the attempt," is the decided response.

"I have given you my word, and I will meet you; now tell me who killed Lord Walter Elstone, the brother of this gentleman?"

"I did!"

The Englishman starts and makes a step toward the man who so boldly confesses the crime; but Buffalo Bill holds him back and continues:

"What had you against Lord Elstone?"

"I needed money, and he had plenty; I hunted with him, and hired two cutthroats to shoot him, I leading him into ambush for them to do so; but after they had done the job they wanted more money, so I shot them down, and had all for myself."

Without a sign of shame, the man makes his confession, while tearing the diamond locket from her bosom, Wild Nell cries:

"And this that you gave me, with your likeness in it, did you take from your victim?"

"Yes, Nell."

Instantly the woman hurls the costly locket upon the ground, and at the feet of Lord Elstone, crying, passionately:

"Take it, sir; I had hoped that he was not so vile as that; to let me wear his likeness over my heart, encircled by a blood-stained frame."

Wild Nell, overcome by her emotion, turns away as if abhorring the sight of the man before her.

"The rest of your booty you sold and squandered?" continued the scout.

"Yes, I turned the jewels into gold and gambled it away."

"Lord Elstone, you need feel no doubt now that your unfortunate brother fell by this man's hand; here, this is yours," and Buffalo Bill takes up the locket, digs the likeness of Roy Kent out with the point of his knife, and hands it to Lord Elstone.

"You once knew a girl whose name was Nellie Melton?"

"Ha! ha! what a good detective you are; there stands sweet Nellie Melton now, but on this border she goes as Wild Nell."

Wild Nell turns upon the speaker, and with blazing eyes, she cries:

"How dare you, Roy Kent, breathe that name here—a name you have dishonored?"

"Nellie, I know all," and Buffalo Bill speaks in the kindest tones; "I know that you once had a happy home, and that, believing Roy Kent an honorable man, he won your love; and I know that he led you to secretly marry him, as you believed, and you found too late that it was but a mock marriage."

"Loving him in spite of the wrong he had done you, you followed him here, and thus it was you became the wild, reckless woman that you are, yet, through all, have clung to him, forgetting that there was one whom you left to mourn you in the desolate home you fled from."

"My mother! my poor, poor, broken-hearted mother!" cries Wild Nell, in an agony of grief.

"Nellie, shall I tell you how I found that mother found her through the act of that false man, who killed an old miner, Alf Buck by name, because he would not allow him to defraud Mr. Melton out of his mine?"

"But ere Alf Buck died, he told me of his life, and

ive me a locket to carry to the only woman he had
er loved.

"That woman was your mother, Nellie, and I carried
her the locket.

"Then it was that she told me of you and of this
n, and she implored me to send you home to her.

"I swore to her that I would yet track Roy Kent to
death, and she bade me find you and give to you this
ness of herself, so long worn by the old miner, and
n would not refuse to come to her."

He holds forth the locket given him by the dying
ner in the Valley Mine, and with trembling hands,
ild Nell seizes it, crying in hoarse tones:

"My mother!"

"Now, Roy Kent, prepare to meet me, and either you
must soon die," and Buffalo Bill throws aside his
ckskin coat.

But in a kind of fascination all stand, unable to move,
eir eyes now turned upon the two men preparing to
et in a death struggle, and all crowd nearer, for they
ow that it is to be a battle of giants.

"Rolling his sleeves up and grasping his knife well in
nd, Roy Kent, with his evil, yet strangely handsome
it fascinating face, wearing an expression of utter
cklessness, awaits the moment to begin the struggle.

A few instructions are given in a low tone, and then,
dead silence, Buffalo Bill advances to the combat.

With a bound, Roy Kent springs to meet him, and
nences the fight with a desperate lunge, which
se the heart of every one who sees it to cease beating
the instant; but the scout skillfully parries the
ust.

Again the two men come together, and this time they
nght in terrible embrace, their knives held together
h giant force, and each glaring into the other's eyes.
Then Roy Kent springs nimbly backward, and it is
dent that he now knows that the scout is his equal in
length and activity.

A moment's rest and again Roy Kent rushes forward;
to knives clash fiercely together for a few parries,
ed then Buffalo Bill catches the blade of his adversary
ectly in his arm, the steel piercing through, while he
ives his own weapon into the breast of the Toll Takers'

"Curse you! oh, curse you!"

And a wild yell goes up from the throats of the In-
ns, a yell in which Jack Nelson and Beaver Ben join,
ile Lord Elstone bounds forward and grasps the hand
Buffalo Bill.

But above the triumphant cries arises one long wail of
nce, as Wild Nell staggers forward and throws herself
on the dying form of the man who has so wronged her.

"Oh, Roy, Roy! speak to me, speak! Even now I love
you!"

Her tone is piteous, and she bends over the dying
man with moans that would touch the hardest, as she
cries:

"Roy, only once look in my eyes, only once before
you die."

The dark eyes open, and the fire of his impetuous
spirit yet burns within them as he turns upon the
woman; then the expression changes to sadness, as he
murmurs:

"I wronged you, Nellie, and you do not hate me."

Again his eyes close, but all hear the word that trem-
bles on his lips. It is simply:

"Farewell!"

* * * * *

When Lord Victor Elstone returned to England he
carried with him the body of his dead brother, as a proof
to Lady Helen Temple that the man she had loved was,
indeed, dead.

It also proved to her when she heard the strange story
of the secret of that lone grave on the Western prairies,
and how Lord Walter Elstone had been murdered and
his murderer had been tracked to death, that she had
learned to love Lord Victor Elstone, and, when he asked
her to become his wife, she gladdened his heart by tell-
ing him how dear he had become to her, and this meant
a wedding that came soon after.

Wild Nell was glad, indeed, to give up her wild life,
and in her mother's love to live down the past, striving
to forget all that she had gone through for the man who
had wrecked her every hope.

Star Eye was much cast down for a while when she
could not win the love of Buffalo Bill, but she rallied
under the friendly regard of Jack Nelson, and later
became the squaw wife of that famous hunter, who had
a ranch upon the Medicine River, where he passed his
days in hunting in company with Beaver Ben and
several other congenial souls.

As for Buffalo Bill, his career as the great Chief of
Army Scouts was far from ended, and he was still to
pass through many more of the most thrilling adven-
tures which have brought to him undying fame as the
greatest scout and frontiersman of the West.

THE END.

Another exciting period in the great plainsman's life
will be the theme of the next story, which will appear
in next week's Buffalo Bill Stories (No. 7). It will be
entitled, "Buffalo Bill's Phantom Arrow; or, The Ghost
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